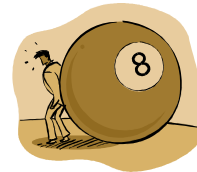


## ARE YOU CONTENT <sup>(kən-těnt')</sup> WITH YOUR CONTENT <sup>(kŏn'těnt')</sup> ?

Most people putting up websites find out that content can be a huge drain on their energy. Content is all the information and written materials you place on your website. Surveys consistently indicate that people are not satisfied with their web content.

This dissatisfaction creates stress for businesses large and small. They find themselves continuously asking these questions:

- Is there enough?
- Is it relevant?
- Is it fresh?
- Does it represent me well?
- Can I keep up with the treadmill of content?



**The answer to each question is often “Never!” It can make you feel as if you are continually behind the eight ball.**

When you first put up your website creating or locating content can be a huge mountain. Many people decide to begin using a small amount with the intention of putting more up later. For many, later never comes.

Even if you are successful in putting up plentiful, high quality content, you can struggle with keeping it fresh and interesting. Companies large and small face these issues daily. Many large companies worry more about finding a good content management tool than about creating good content. Small companies don't feel they have the time to keep up with it in light of their other responsibilities. It is easy to get distracted.

You need to have a content strategy and remember **the three Ms—message, method, and mechanism.**

### MESSAGE

You should develop a strategy for content. Start with what you are. In my business, I create content because I am an expert in my field. I give advice based on what I am hearing in the marketplace and where it intersects with my expertise and interests. Others shouldn't create content, but should leverage or use content created by others to drive their message. “Expert” content for some companies comes across like a sales brochure. Still others should only provide links to experts' websites. Your content is a reflection of you as a business and needs to be aligned with your eBusiness strategy and value discipline.

### METHOD

There are three ways of getting content: hire, grow, or do.

1. You can hire content to be created. Of course, consistency will be an issue. The going price begins at around \$250 per article, with a wide variance in quality. You still need to outline your material and hope your freelance writer will preserve your substance and message.
2. You can grow what you need. Find a college student to help you with your writing. There are plenty of students with curiosity in your field and an interest in either news writing or a freelance writing career. Turn them into your intern. Work in a collaborative fashion, handing over more and more of the writing to them. You have an opportunity to mold them in your own image. Pay them well. This is not doing your content on the cheap. You want to nurture the relationship and sustain it until they are ready to move on to bigger things.
3. You can do it yourself, if you enjoy writing and do it reasonable well. This is the best way to give your website consistency and the personal touch. But anticipate that it will take more time and energy than

you expect! You need to have others look at your material. I have a great editor who spots all my inconsistencies, poor grammar, and bad communication techniques. She frees me to “just write” without having to think about things which are not in my realm of interest or talent. I often have a marketing person who helps make sure graphics and text work together and present a great message.

By the way, never steal content. It is too easy to get caught and your reputation is on the line. Beg, borrow... but don't steal.

### MECHANISM

There are simple (but difficult to execute) steps to managing a stream of content.

**Schedule** - Lay out a calendar for an extended period of the dates you want to publish content to your site. Think through other activities such as conferences, speaking events, projects, vacations, and personal commitments. Time materials to be in others' hands “ahead” of special events. There is no better time to publish a newsletter than just prior to the end of a conference registration on your topic.

**Commit** – Once you know your publishing schedule, block off time for writing, editing, locating graphics, and final formatting. Allocate adequate time and resources. Move other projects around your writing schedule, not the other way around. Don't allow excuses or distractions from getting in the way. Commit to your schedule.

**Write** – Quickly outline what you want to communicate. Next, get it down on paper. Don't get too hung up on where things are going. Just write. Make your writing accessible to your target audience.

**Edit** – Don't be afraid to be ruthless in cutting down what you have written. Better yet, let others edit for you. You'll appreciate their fresh perspectives.

**Format** – Use the right tools for formatting the final product. Use attractive graphics that tie together your theme when you are preparing a web page or a PDF.

**Measure** – What gets measured gets done. Measure your success in getting your content published. Reward yourself for success. I am looking forward to that ice cream right now.

**Remove** – Be ruthless in removing content before it becomes outdated. By the way, never put the date of the article on the website.

Here are some additional resources for writing well for the World Wide Web:

<http://www.collegeboard.com/article/0,3868,2-8-0-122,00.html> - College Board writing tips.

<http://www.webreference.com/content/writing/> - Writing Well for the Web.

<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~webteach/articles/text.html> - Writing for the Web.

<http://www.hopetillman.com/findqual.html> - Evaluating Quality on the Net.

<http://www.useit.com/alertbox/9710a.html> - Jakob Nielsen's How Users Read on the Web and

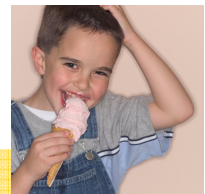
<http://www.useit.com/alertbox/weblogs.html> on BLOG usability.

<http://www.firstgov.gov/webcontent/index.shtml> – This is a government content website. There are some samples and advice on best practices. But remember it is a government website; some of their advice is inappropriate for business and can be downright amusing.

In this newsletter, I have focused on the generation and collection of content. If you find you need help with evaluating tools or creating processes to generate and delivery quality content for your business, give us a call.

We will help create a (kŏn'tĕnt) content strategy to keep you (kĕn-tĕnt) content.

*Well, off for my ice cream!*



If you find you need help with evaluating tools or creating processes to create and delivery quality content for your business, give us a call.

**We can help!**

*Call us at  
or contact us at*

**585-377-3439  
www.ebizk.com**