



How to create meaningful goals and powerful personas for your content strategy

Andy Williams

A father of two grown-up daughters, a cyclist, an activist and a serial volunteer, Andy is most intrigued by what makes you tick. He's also co-MD of Cohesive.

About 5 minutes

Part 1 of a deeper dive into the content strategy process, with simple-but-helpful exercises to generate a sense of purpose and direction.

In my original blog, we reflected that we're all guilty of creating content on autopilot from time to time. I don't know what your take is on being a content creator. You might think it's a curse, or a blessing. Regardless, we can easily agree that it takes a lot of time, and sometimes creates a lot of stress. There's no point going through all that unless it generates good outcomes – conversations with potential new clients. That's what a content strategy helps deliver.

Our style of content strategy is agile and fit-for-purpose. It's the basics that you need to understand to make your content more valuable and meaningful.

As a reminder, here are the five questions you're always trying to answer – or answer better – when creating a content strategy.

- Why are you writing your content?
- Who are you writing your content for?
- What are your themes and what links them – your mission?
- What actions do you want to provoke?
- What directions and forms can you take this in?

This blog is a deeper dive into the first two questions: why are we writing our content and who are we writing it for? For an overview of the entire process, go [here](#). The final three questions are addressed [here](#).

So, why *are* you writing your content?

The ultimate goal for your content is to exert gravitational attraction over limitless distances on those people that you'd most like to do business with. You could go further and state that it can also repel people that you don't want to work with. For instance if you're a cloud services business that works exclusively in the government sector, then you may as well let private enterprise know (...for now, maybe) that you're not focused on them.

Businesses that can articulate a bigger purpose generally do better at this than those that can't. Their content is aimed at people who share their purpose and values – which is powerfully attractive. But don't despair if you're not in that enviable position yet. The process below works for anyone.

Exercise: setting some goals for your content

What contribution will our content make to our business?

Your content has to earn its keep – it's going to take way too much time and effort not to. But there are lots of different ways to evaluate its contribution.

Our content will:

- Demonstrate our credibility and experience, as people encounter us for the first time
- Inform and educate, sharing our expertise so we can build trust
- Begin a dialogue with new prospects
- Contribute x per cent of our lead funnel

What qualities will our content display?

Start with your purpose. What qualities does it suggest? Still working on the purpose? Then read through the list below with an open mind. What resonates with you, your subject matter experts and your business? And what other qualities come to mind? I'd say some will be for the here and now, and others can be aspirational.

Our content will display:

Your content has to earn its keep – it's going to take way too much time and effort not to. But there are lots of different ways to evaluate its contribution. Think through as many as you can, and here are a few starters.



Content that attracts and converts is mostly about your customers' passions, values and careabouts.

Understand what makes your customers tick, and plan your content with them in mind. Even if your business has created 'personas' to represent generic customer types and needs, this next exercise is still invaluable. It will either confirm and add context to those personas, or it will show up some gaps and provide you with better insights. Both good results, right?

And credit where it's due. This next exercise is my take on a process that I learned from the folks at Valuable Content. More about them below.

Exercise: understanding customer careabouts

Do this exercise yourself. Then sit down with some colleagues that are close to customers and run them through it too. And every quarter or so, repeat the exercise, bringing in everything you've learned about your customers' reading habits from the previous months.

Start here – Which of our customers allow us to do our very best work?

- And which customers do we like to work with best – and why?
- Thinking of those customers, name the people behind the brands.

And then – For each of your best/favourite individuals (a minimum of two, contrasting characters), answer this:

- What role (job titles can be misleading...) do they play in their business
- What values do they embody?
- What are their daily careabouts? What are they working on with you?
- How do they feel about those challenges right now?
- What's their aspiration? What does nirvana look like for them?

Now – List five questions related to their day job that you could answer for them. Your answers should provide much-needed insight, and lighten their load a little.

Finally – If you've analysed a good number of customers, you're going to find commonality around role, aspiration and careabouts. If so it's legitimate to boil down each group into a more generic persona. But for each persona, include the names of the individuals that shaped it. And don't lose the original profiles, because you're going to look them up when you get to the nitty gritty of creating actual content.

Good work – grab a coffee, you've earned it.

Top tips

#1

When you come to begin a piece of content it's still vitally important that you bring **your** story – the one you're best qualified to tell – to the party. That still means meeting your customers' needs but from your perspective. It's where your authenticity comes from. Content that focuses solely on the persona's needs can feel trite, despite all your efforts.

#2

One of the best I've ever been gifted with: You can plan your content around personas, but always create your content with a **person** in mind: I'm writing this for Jane Bloggs at ACME. Use the profiles you created above to get inside Jane's head, and then get started.



And finally...

Here's the link to the [final article](#) in this series, addressing how you can discover and follow the threads and themes that should drive your content, planning actions and reactions, and scoping some of the forms that valuable content can take.

Let me know how you're getting along, and fire off some questions – andyw@wearecohesive.com – or comment below. I'll help all I can.

If self-help is your thing, you could think about going to 'Pub School'. The crew at Valuable Content run a programme officially titled The Content Marketing Masterclass, but affectionately known by those who've done it – including me – as Pub School. Part teaching, part coaching and part group therapy, it might be just the supported deep dive into content strategy that you think you need.