



# IMPROVING SALES CONVERSIONS

IS LIKE HERDING CATS

A radical process for designing customer experiences that accelerate sales



WHEN YOUR CONTENT ISN'T ALIGNED WITH THE  
BUYER'S JOURNEY YOUR MARKETING CAMPAIGNS  
ARE IGNORED BY YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE.



## **WANTED: MARKETING REBELS**

If you want to achieve faster sales conversions and multiply the impact of marketing, you've got to be a change agent, a rebel. A fearless "cat herder" who's not intimidated by the challenges of aligning marketing and sales with customer needs.





## YOU MUST TAKE A BOLD STANCE TO IMPROVE MARKETING

Why? As marketers, we know that the marketing and sales landscape continues to evolve at an accelerating rate. Achieving your marketing goals is much tougher if you don't have a clear focus and sound strategies.

A case in point is content. If your company is like most, you've deployed a sizeable collection of blog posts, videos, infographics, e-books and other types of content during the last few years. But has it made an impact on your company's lead generation and sales results? If your content strategy is weak or dated, then the impact is probably negligible.

Intuitively, you suspect that much of your content never gets seen by your prospects. People are too busy to keep up with all of it. In addition, your sales team doesn't consistently use it to influence prospects. According to a study conducted by LinkedIn and the Content Marketing Institute, 80% of all content goes unused by sales.

You can solve this problem! To do so, you must take a page from the late Steve Jobs' playbook and "Think Different." Not just incrementally different. Radically different.

It's time for radical candor. **Are you up for it?**

Instead of producing a pile of loosely related content, why not be more strategic? Why not ignite a revolution in how you serve your target audience? Why not design a customer experience that makes them WANT to do business with you?

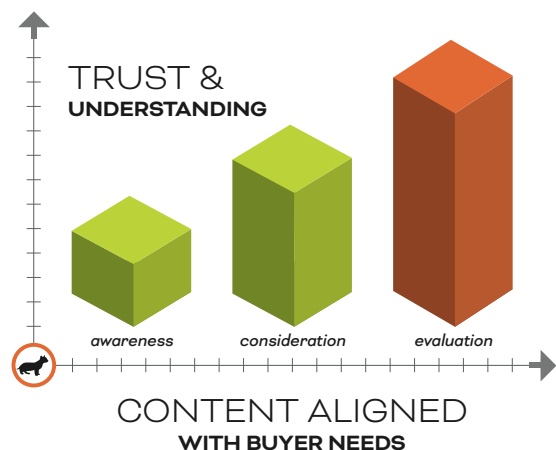
One potent way to do so is to align your content with their purchasing process — also known as the "buyer's journey." That increases the odds that your messages will resonate with and inspire them to reach a buying decision faster. Collaborating with your sales team can increase your odds of success even more.

Stop playing cat and mouse with your prospects. It's time to get all your content and messaging aligned around their needs!

## RISE ABOVE THE BACKGROUND NOISE

In recent years, it has become very hard to ensure that your messages are heard and acted upon by your target audience. There's so much "noise" competing for their attention that their ability to focus on a specific message has been severely diminished. Sort of like a cat chasing after a shiny dot of light.

If you don't design a content-driven experience that's closely aligned with their deepest needs and aspirations, your prospects will simply ignore your messages — and your company.



## **JUST LOOK AT YOUR PERSONAL EXPERIENCE**

Every day, you receive hundreds of messages a day, hawking products and services you don't want or need. You've gotten extremely good at filtering out anything that isn't relevant.

Delete. Delete. Delete.

It's easy to get rid of irrelevant messages.

Your key prospects do the same thing. They decide in an instant what matters to them and what doesn't. Irrelevant or downright bad content can actually harm your company's reputation. If your prospects think your messages are wasting their time, they may decide to ignore all future communication from you — just like an aloof feline.

They're looking for a voice they can trust. A rebel who gives them real, relevant, actionable advice that helps them do business more effectively.

You have an opportunity to be that rebel.

To do that, you must become obsessively customer-centric. Don't make an educated guess at the content you THINK your audience

needs. Really dig deep to understand their needs, behavior, challenges and aspirations. Know them even better than they know themselves. Anticipate how they think. What worries them. The problems they desperately need someone to solve for them.

You need to use a clever content strategy to "get into their heads," build trust and educate them about solutions to their problems. You need to naturally lead them to the conclusion that you are the best source of knowledge and expertise about the challenges they face — and therefore a worthy vendor or partner.

But connecting your content to the buyer's journey can be daunting. There are many moving parts and it's hard to know where to start. You're not alone. Many marketers don't know how to set up and manage such a multi-faceted campaign.

This eGuide explains how to completely rethink the way in which you use content to make this revolution happen. It reveals how to craft content that cuts through the clutter, influences your key prospects and nurtures greater numbers of them to sales.



## FOCUS ON THE BUYER'S JOURNEY

Your prospective buyers are largely in control of the buying process. They prefer to do their research and then talk to salespeople after they've educated themselves about potential solutions and prospective vendors.

Despite their independence, however, they DO need help during this process. They're looking for a potential supplier that "gets" them — who understands their needs at a deep level. Unfortunately, in many industries, those enlightened suppliers are hard to find.



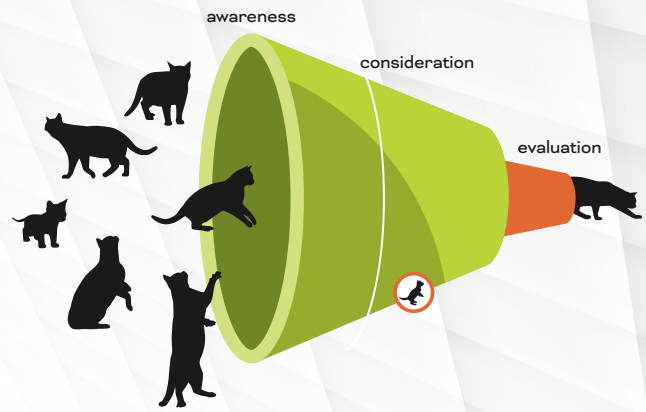
**Be one and take three steps ahead of your competition!**

The implication is simple but profound: The company that cares deeply about the needs of its customers and does the best job of aligning relevant content to them will win.

Hopefully, that's you. If it's not, then you have a serious problem!

When your content isn't aligned with the buyer's journey, here are some of the unpleasant symptoms you may experience. Do any of these sound familiar?

- Your marketing campaigns are ignored by your target audience — because they no longer trust your company or its advice
- Marketing only makes a minimal impact on leads and sales
- Your company has a lack of marketing qualified leads for your salespeople to pursue
- Your salespeople find it hard to get in the door because prospects don't view your company as a credible vendor
- Sales are flatlining — business growth stagnates
- Your competitors win more business



On the other hand, when content is properly aligned throughout the buyer's journey, your company can enjoy some significant advantages:

- You're able to gain and retain your prospects' attention and trust
- You understand them and the challenges they face and have built a reputation as a problem-solver
- You're able to nurture them along the path to a sale in greater numbers and faster than ever before
- You become their hero

## WHY DOES THE BUYER'S JOURNEY MATTER?

Having a well thought out content strategy that's mapped to the buyer's journey gives you four powerful advantages:

1. It enables you to deliver an exceptional and meaningful buyer experience, which builds trust.
2. It enables your company to stay top-of-mind and differentiated from competitors during their vendor selection process.
3. It enables you to increase and effectively measure marketing's impact on revenue.
4. It enables you to integrate sales and marketing effectively.

Let's take a closer look at how each of these rebel advantages can help you to win more than your share of the business:

## **REBEL ADVANTAGE #1: CREATE AN EXCEPTIONAL CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE**

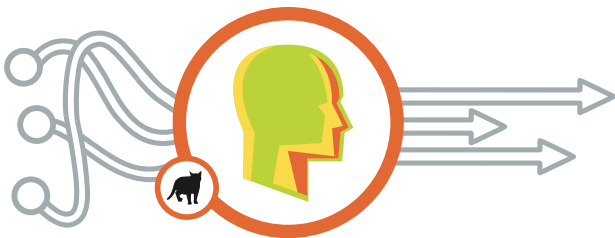
Most business-to-business buying decisions are complex and involve multiple individuals. Almost every decision-maker and influencer is hungry for a trusted source of information they can rely on for knowledge and advice, so they can make intelligent buying decisions.

There's no question that the B2B buying process is hard:

- 50% of B2B buyers say they have incomplete, unclear or poorly defined criteria for their purchase decision (Aberdeen)
- 31% of buyers say the length of their B2B purchase cycle has increased significantly compared to a year ago (DemandGen)
- 45% of buyers say they're spending more time researching purchases compared to last year (DemandGen)

According to research conducted by Gartner, buyers must complete six key tasks as part of their purchasing process:

- Problem identification,
- Solution exploration,
- Requirements building,
- Vendor selection,
- Validation, and
- Consensus creation.



Targeted, personalized information can help to streamline each step of this complex process for each member of the buying committee.

Only half of B2B buyers say that their business goals are well defined when they are researching a purchase. That means your optimized content

is critically important to help them reach clarity and take action.

But doesn't this strategy require a lot of content to implement? Yes, it does. It also requires a commitment to consistently create unique, targeted content that elevates their experience. That's why so few companies are willing to do it, and why it can become a competitive advantage for you and your band of rebels.

## **REBEL ADVANTAGE #2: STAY TOP OF MIND DURING THE BUYING PROCESS**

To keep your company top of mind, you must communicate with your prospects on a regular basis. Too frequently and you'll scare them off. No one likes to be "carpet bombed" with marketing messages. Too infrequently and they may forget about you.

Remember, your goal is to create a guided experience for prospects that supports their research, evaluation and decision-making processes — not the one YOU think they should follow.

In addition, remember that each person who is involved in the buying process has different needs. The economic buyer, for example, is looking for a solution that is cost-effective and promises a positive ROI. An operations person, on the other hand, may be looking for a solution that streamlines his or her work processes.

## **REBEL ADVANTAGE #3: MULTIPLY MARKETING'S IMPACT ON REVENUE**

If you're successful in aligning content to the buyer's journey, you can generate a greater number of marketing qualified leads (MQLs) — people who are sales-ready and are more likely to buy. This approach has an important benefit. It enables your salespeople to focus on what they do best: closing A-level prospects, not wasting time trying to qualify a large number of undifferentiated low-priority contacts.

Ultimately, this approach can help you to win more than your share of sales conversations and sales in your industry. That rocks!

## **REBEL ADVANTAGE #4: RISE ABOVE YOUR COMPETITORS WITH INTEGRATED MARKETING AND SALES**

Another powerful way to stand tall and deliver a seamless experience to your target audience — and win more than your share of sales — is to ensure that your sales and marketing teams are aligned with each other. Here's why that's important:

During the buyer's journey, marketing must create messages, content and campaigns for sales to execute. In return, sales must provide feedback to marketing, which it can use to refine those assets and tactics. The best case scenario is for the two functions to have a symbiotic

relationship in which your messaging and sales outreach become more targeted and effective over time.

Unfortunately, this level of integration is only a pipe dream in many companies. Multiple studies show that the majority of the content created by marketing is never used by salespeople.

A strategic combination of marketing and personalized sales touches can move your prospects toward a sale faster and give buyers greater confidence that they're making the right decision. When sales and marketing work closely together, content can become a truly measurable asset in your organization for the first time.

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## **HOW TO ALIGN YOUR CONTENT WITH THE BUYER'S JOURNEY**

Now that you understand the importance of strategically aligning your content to the buyer's journey, here are some tips on how to make that happen:

Your content strategy needs to be tied to your company's key business objectives. In order for the C-suite to take marketing seriously, everything it does must be aligned to key business objectives. Otherwise, your efforts won't be sustainable. You can be a rebel — but you still need to deliver results!

A strong marketing strategy is a must: All of your company's marketing efforts, from your website and emails to your collateral and social media elements, need to convey a strong brand image that promises exceptional customer value.

Your company's website needs to provide your target audience with easy access to the information they need, and your emails need to be focused on nurturing them toward a sale. Your communications must also be differentiated from your competitors, so your prospects can clearly recognize and understand the revolutionary benefits of your solution.

Nurturing is a must: Today, sales and marketing executives are almost universal in their use of the

funnel model of converting prospects into sales. It's a numbers game: You communicate with 100 prospects, who turn into 10 leads and 3 of them buy.

But leads don't naturally "drop" from one stage of the funnel to the next. That's not how it works. Funnels don't have "gravity."

In order to help convert prospects to customers, you must actively nurture them through each step of their buyer's journey. One way to do that is with email "drip" campaigns that are designed to deploy on a timed basis after a prospect downloads an eGuide or signs up for a webinar.

You need to cultivate a nurturing mindset. Simple, but revolutionary!

Strong, well-defined buyer personas: Don't assume that you know who your key prospects are, how they think and what motivates them. Rebels believe in doing the research — the hard part that ordinary marketers tend to skip.

Talk to your best customers and to customer-facing people in your organization. Look for patterns in what they're telling you, and then document that in archetypes that describe the people who make and influence the purchasing decisions in your industry.

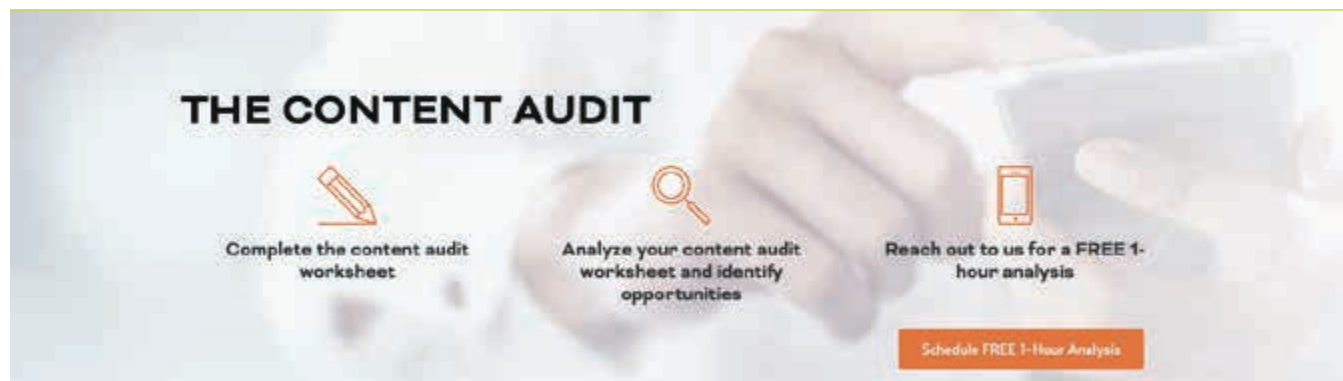
Content must be mapped to each step of the buyer's journey: In order to do an effective job of nurturing prospects from awareness, through consideration and evaluation to a sale, you must map your content to the entire buying process. Most companies concentrate the bulk of their content on generating awareness. That's not enough.

You need to ask questions like, "Which of our existing content assets will empower our prospects with the knowledge they need to move to the next step on their journey?" Your understanding of these needs should be informed by the detailed buyer personas you've created.

Perform a content gap analysis: Create a table that contains the following information for each piece of your existing content:

- The name of the article, eGuide or other content asset
- The stage of the buyer's journey it applies to
- The persona to whom it is targeted

Your goal is to create a visual inventory of your existing content. You can then identify gaps and brainstorm the new content you need to create to fill them. Remember: Your goal is to ensure that your ideal prospects' information and knowledge needs are filled at each step of their journey.



## DOWNLOAD THE FREE CULTIVATE CONTENT AUDIT AT [CONTENTAUDITWORKSHEET.COM](https://contentauditworksheet.com).

You should also conduct an analysis of your competitors' content. This may help you uncover key customer needs that no one in your marketplace is addressing — gaps that you can fill with a compelling, revolutionary point of view.

Use data to show where prospects are in the buying process: As your ideal prospects consume content, their actions generate signals that tell you where they are in their journey.

For example, if a prospect downloads one of your eGuides, that's an indicator that they have

a specific problem for which they're seeking a solution. Let's say that you followed up with a drip campaign of five emails over the next two weeks, culminating with an invitation to a webinar that tackles the same topic, but at a deeper level. If they register for that learning opportunity, it's a signal that they're moving into the consideration stage of their buying process. They are starting to engage with you on a deeper level.

To capture and manage these signals, a marketing automation system is a must.



## CONCLUSION

The bottom line is that a well-defined strategy — which includes a clearly-understood, thoroughly-researched buyer's journey, with content aligned to it — is the key to delivering marketing and sales results that purr right along!

It doesn't sound all that revolutionary on the surface. But in fact, it is — because so few marketers are actually doing it!

Let's recap: Your ideal audience is now largely in control of the buying process. That means you need to elevate your marketing strategy to meet their needs head-on. As we've demonstrated, aligning your content to their buying process can help to:

- Streamline their research, evaluation and decision-making processes,
- Build trust in your knowledge and expertise, and
- Position your company as the go-to source for the products and services they need to grow THEIR businesses.

Stand up for the value of marketing: In many companies, marketing is relegated to the role of a service bureau, churning out all of the printed and electronic communications

the business needs to communicate with its customers and prospects. As a result, leaders don't view it as a strategic function of the business.

Marketing can contribute so much more to elevate your organization's strategy and its bottom line. But to prove its value to the C-suite, you must be willing to play a bigger game. To stand tall. To become a Marketing Rebel.

Download your free  
Content Audit now at:

**[ContentAuditWorksheet.com](https://ContentAuditWorksheet.com)**

It's the first step in designing a more effective buyer's journey for your company and its offerings!

## **LET THE CAT OUT OF THE BAG**

Share the InfoGraphic on the next page with your team. It quickly explains the concept and importance of ALIGNING marketing content with the buyer's journey.



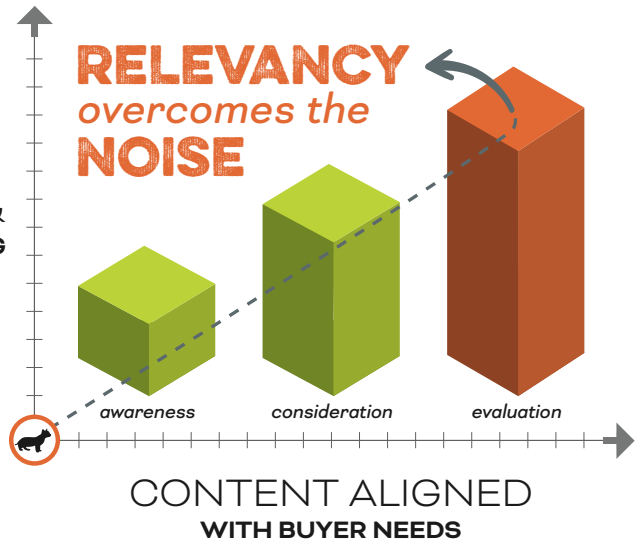
# IMPROVING SALES CONVERSIONS is like herding cats



## Start with a **CONTRARIAN PERSPECTIVE**

Ignite a revolution in how you  
design the customer experience

TRUST &  
UNDERSTANDING



Ideal prospects  
enter your  
sales funnel.

awareness

consideration

evaluation

Nurturing turns  
them into  
qualified leads.

**Prospects must  
BE NURTURED**

**ALIGNMENT  
makes your brand  
RELEVANT**



### Advantages of ALIGNMENT

- Customer experience
- Top-of-mind
- Multiply impact
- Aligned sales and marketing

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