

Are you ready to commit to a long-term relationship with content marketing?

 By [Louisa Du Toit](#)

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Content marketing lies close to my heart. I have spent quite a few years building a meaningful relationship with it as my side-piece. I believe that it should be at the centre of how you interact with your community (yes, I call an audience a community) to help grow brand advocacy and trust.



Photo by Christin Hume on [Unsplash.com](#)

You interact with your community by telling stories. Stories about how you can solve their problems. And by stories, I don't mean novels. We'll touch on that later.

I also believe that there may be some ambiguity about what content marketing is, and I hope I can clarify some of the misconceptions.

Content marketing does not an ad campaign make

You could argue that you can tell a great story with an ad campaign, but the goals for content marketing are different. Content marketing is not, and will probably never be, an ad campaign.

When you set content marketing goals, you want to track awareness, loyalty, education and engagement (to name a few). Basically, you want to make sure people know who you are, what you do and love you for it.

Tip: You will notice that none of these goals mention increased sales.

But, ads bring the bucks to the yard

Yes, but there's absolutely no long-term value for your community in a single ad. An ad is merely a vessel for a short-term goal like lead generation or online sales.

Content marketing, on the other hand, is a means for your company to connect with your community in a cost-effective, less intrusive way. You can still get your leads and online sales. But, you're also inspiring and connecting in a meaningful way (read: you're adding value to their lives).

Ads versus online content

Even though content marketing is online for the most part, you should never think about it as an ad campaign. Content marketing takes a commitment to deliver the right content to the right community member.

In Mass Media 101 (way back in 2004), I learned that you need to break through the noise to get your audience's attention. The entire adscape has changed so much since then.

The noise is still there, it's just different

We now have brands competing for attention not only on traditional channels but also on digital channels. This means the noise is louder, and your potential customer has to sort through so much more to find you.

They hear your ads on during their commute, they see a billboard on the highway, and ads pop up when your community members are searching for information. Hell, even their Gmail inbox shows ads. Our communities are overwhelmed, and ads serve as a distraction.

How can you rise above the noise?

Have you ever heard of [Google's Zero Moment of Truth?](#) Many of us know it as micro-moments. It refers to "the moment in the buying process when the consumer researches a product before purchase".

Your clients are researching a product before they purchase. It has become the norm. People don't just meander casually into stores, waiting to ask a salesperson about the product anymore. Chances are if they're visiting you, they have already visited several sources to find information about the product they are looking for.

And here comes the teachable moment. You should be there, publishing credible content. You will be seen as a reliable resource, and this means that when the time to purchase arrives, you'll have the trust needed to make the sale.

Tip: Make sure you're out there with a mix of content, ready and waiting - from social posts to blogs, white papers and even reviews to support the buyer's journey.

Your patience will be rewarded in the long-term

Think of content marketing strategy as a long-term relationship. You see yourself spending time with your person and growing old with them. To make this happen, you spend time with your other half, go on dates, find activities you can do together, and eventually, you may get married or make a long-term commitment.

To see the results from your content marketing efforts, you need to be in it for the long run. If you're just in it for the short term, like with a casual relationship or, dare I say it, one night stand, you won't see any growth. The results will not be visible immediately, but you need to stay centred on delivering valuable content, regularly to your community (take them on dates!).

A South African example of content marketing done right

To me, Yuppiechef is an excellent example of content marketing done right in South Africa.

I am a huge fan, and will always recommend them to others. Why? They are not the cheapest online store. But I have been supporting them for close to nine years, and each and every time I order online, their service surpasses that of many other brands.

Over the years, Yuppiechef has launched and published so many helpful articles, newsletters and courses to help their community. And their online presence is unlike any other. You feel the human connection whenever you interact with them.

Do I click on their online ads? No. But I do read their newsletters and will click on those if I feel like it. In this case, Yuppiechef has a brand advocate in me. They don't pay me. I don't work for them. But I am one of their community members who enjoy their content, I will recommend them to others, and I trust them and their products.

What content marketing has taught me

Content marketing tells stories. Stories of your brand and how your brand can help your community solve their problems. These stories can take several shapes - testimonials, white papers, case studies, blogs, social posts, press releases. They're not novels. And not all stories will evoke unhealthy doses of dopamine.

Content marketing isn't about hard-sells. It's about being helpful and building trust.

You can truly build a community with content marketing, growing brand advocacy and trust through real people and not pay them for their opinion. It will come naturally.

Don't be commitment-shy

It is absolutely worth it to commit to and invest in content marketing efforts for your business. It's in no way a quick fix, but your efforts now will reward you with your happily ever after in the long-term.

ABOUT LOUISA DU TOIT

Louisa du Toit is a marketing and communications specialist with over 10 years of experience. She founded Maidenand in 2018 and focuses on content marketing, inbound marketing, email marketing, brand-building and identity as well as user- and customer experience.

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