

## CREATING CONTENT

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Let us quickly look at what we mean by “content” – I guess a good working definition is that content consists of the words, images and other informative material that you can present to customers – for promotional purposes this may be text used in a press release then reused in your newsletter and your social media. On your website content may be a compilation of technical description, photographs, tables, dynamic graphics or video etc. In short it is the material that populates your promotion, tech support and so on – the material your potential customers are looking for and existing customers expect to find.

Hopefully it is pretty clear that you need “content”. Hopefully also you can write or otherwise produce this sort of stuff - or know someone who can. If you can't – then there are plenty of people out there willing to help – and some are even reasonably priced!

How then can we approach the task? *Well firstly let's recognize that this is a creative process and as such is not likely to work best under pressure* at least in the early stages – especially if you are not used to writing/videoing or whatever – even if you are working with a professional it is likely still to take some time to learn how to work together. Personally I find my creativity works best away from the office and its interruptions, I tend to review the material, possibly make some notes and then just “sleep on it” – my most productive times are often when I am doing something else entirely – since I find my subconscious processes things best when left alone to get on with it, while the rest of me is relaxing or working on something completely unconnected. I am lucky since generally I can then sit down and write the piece – you may find a more structured process works better for you.

- Throughout the creative process it is worth bearing in mind that *what you say in your promotional material, P.R. etc, should be valuable* or have recognizable potential to be so.
- *Express yourself clearly* - so that the valuable information your material contains is easily understood. Use of technical terms and industry specific jargon is all helpful so long as you do not use it instead of actual information. Present appropriately – not every customer will understand your technology in depth or need to – so a press release needs to be widely comprehensible – while a tech data sheet needs to address the needs of someone who is actually interested in the detail.
- *Don't forget that communication is achieved through a number of channels:*

- pictures – need to be eye-catching and clear
- words – should be relevant and informative
- presentation – use a clear and attractive layout
- illustrations, graphics, video, animations
- social media engagement
  
- *The style and format of your content will depend on situation:* a data sheet needs lots of technical information; a P.R. piece needs some tech info but more about “what will it do?” A website needs all the “content” you can assemble, presented in an easy to navigate package. A newsletter should be a quick update with a lead in to greater depth probably by linking to the relevant page on your website. Be appropriate – consider what you would expect if you were the reader. An animated graphic or even a very short video may show instantly something which you simply could not get across in words and still pictures – such as the working of a mechanism, the correct way of adjusting something, the flow of a process or the components in a system.
  
- *Consider carefully what you would consider valuable information* – perhaps ask yourself or a colleague what you would want to find in a competitors material. Such a list might look like this:
  - tech specs
  - tech data
  - performance data
  - application info
  - technology explanation
  - prices
  - cost of ownership
  - what does it look like? – graphics, photos
  - product demo – video
  - how does it work + video
  - how do I install it + video
  - how do I adjust it + video
  - how does it compare with alternatives
  - examples of problems solved
  - how to do something - Whitepapers

- *Then collate the notes and raw material for your “content” into a brief* for whoever is going to write it, edit it or compile it into a document. Think what you would want to know if you were writing it – if you are writing it then you will still benefit from this process at least initially.
- *Remember the values of clarity and brevity* - be clear and brief in general – KISS – Keep It Simple Stupid – where you need to say more take what space you need, but learn to recognize when to stop. So what is the correct answer to the question “how long is a piece of string?” answer “as long as it needs to be”.
- Finally *remember that “content” is what you talk to customers about every day.*