**Content Plan**

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**Prepared By:** Lee Brooks **| Cromulent Marketing**

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# Introduction

This document defines the specific objectives, supporting strategies, and executable tactics that together constitute an integrated Content Plan for **COMPANY NAME**.

This plan was developed to drive content strategy for the period from **YYYY-MM-DD** through **YYYY-MM-DD**; however, the plan is applicable in this form so long as the objectives presented below remain valid.

## Summary

The ultimate goal of this plan is to **OBJECTIVE** by **SHORT DESCRIPTION OF MECHANISMS**.

In support of this overall business goal, this content plan has three specific objectives:

1. **Objective #1**
2. **Objective #2**
3. **Objective #3**

These objectives are explained in detail in the Program Objectives section. The degree to which achieving each objective is dependent upon distribution channels and content is outlined in Table 2.

To work towards these objectives we will employ **#** specific strategies (in addition to some general strategic best-practices that are described in the Appendix I – General Characteristics and Strategies section):

* **Strategy #1:** brief statement/description
* **Strategy #2:** brief statement/description
* **Strategy #3:** brief statement/description
* **Strategy #4:** brief statement/description
* **Strategy #5:** brief statement/description

The contributory relationship between these objective-oriented strategies and the objectives is explained in Table 3; the strategies themselves are explained in detail in the section Objective-Oriented Strategies.

Tactically, this plan calls for **#** types of content:

* **Content Type #1:** brief statement/description
* **Content Type #2:** brief statement/description
* **Content Type #3:** brief statement/description
* **Content Type #4:** brief statement/description
* **Content Type #5:** brief statement/description

More complete descriptions of each content type and explanations of how each supports the objective-oriented strategies are included in Table 4.

## The Way Forward

If we assume for a moment that the program objectives and strategies won’t change significantly over the next twelve months, then by **YYYY-MM-DD**, we will have:

* **Backward-looking statement of an achievement, new state of things, or result**
* **Backward-looking statement of an achievement, new state of things, or result**
* **Backward-looking statement of an achievement, new state of things, or result**
* **Backward-looking statement of an achievement, new state of things, or result**
* **Backward-looking statement of an achievement, new state of things, or result**

Table 5 proposes a high-level timeline of program activity for the period of **YYYY-MM-DD** through **YYYY-MM-DD**, in pursuit of the future vision outlined above; Table 1, below, abbreviates the timeline to focus only the early stage activities of **MONTH** through **MONTH**.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **MONTH – MONTH** |
| **Content Type #1** | Describe the activities and specific deliverables for Content Type #1 for the period of MONTH – MONTH. |
| **Content Type #2** | Describe the activities and specific deliverables for Content Type #1 for the period of MONTH – MONTH. |
| **Content Type #3** | Describe the activities and specific deliverables for Content Type #1 for the period of MONTH – MONTH. |
| **Content Type #4** | Describe the activities and specific deliverables for Content Type #1 for the period of MONTH – MONTH. |
| **Content Type #5** | Describe the activities and specific deliverables for Content Type #1 for the period of MONTH – MONTH. |

Table 1 - Program activities from MONTH through MONTH

# Program Objectives

The ultimate goal of this plan is to **OBJECTIVE** by **SHORT DESCRIPTION OF MECHANISMS**.

In support of this overall business goal, this content plan has three specific objectives:

1. **Objective #1**
2. **Objective #2**
3. **Objective #3**

## Objective #1

The primary objective of this plan is to **DESCRIBE THE OBJECTIVE AND WHAT IT WILL TAKE TO ACHIEVE**.

## Objective #2

The secondary objective is to **DESCRIBE THE OBJECTIVE AND WHAT IT WILL TAKE TO ACHIEVE**.

## Objective #3

The third objective is to **DESCRIBE THE OBJECTIVE AND WHAT IT WILL TAKE TO ACHIEVE**.

## Using Distribution Channels and Content in Pursuit of Objectives

The degree to which each objective is dependent upon distribution channels and content varies, and is outlined in the table below.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Objective #1** | **Objective #2** | **Objective #3** |
| **Distribution Channels** | **High || Medium || Low || Nil**Description/justification for rating. | **High || Medium || Low || Nil**Description/justification for rating. | **High || Medium || Low || Nil**Description/justification for rating. |
| **Content** | **High || Medium || Low || Nil**Description/justification for rating. | **High || Medium || Low || Nil**Description/justification for rating. | **High || Medium || Low || Nil**Description/justification for rating. |

Table 2 - Dependency of objectives upon distribution channels and content

# Objective-Oriented Strategies

The table below lists the **#** objective-oriented strategies within this content plan and outlines the degree to which each contributes to one or more of the objectives.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Objective #1** | **Objective #2** | **Objective #3** |
| **Strategy #1** | **High || Medium || Low || Nil**Description/justification for rating. | **High || Medium || Low || Nil**Description/justification for rating. | **High || Medium || Low || Nil**Description/justification for rating. |
| **Strategy #2** | **High || Medium || Low || Nil**Description/justification for rating. | **High || Medium || Low || Nil**Description/justification for rating. | **High || Medium || Low || Nil**Description/justification for rating. |
| **Strategy #3** | **High || Medium || Low || Nil**Description/justification for rating. | **High || Medium || Low || Nil**Description/justification for rating. | **High || Medium || Low || Nil**Description/justification for rating. |
| **Strategy #4** | **High || Medium || Low || Nil**Description/justification for rating. | **High || Medium || Low || Nil**Description/justification for rating. | **High || Medium || Low || Nil**Description/justification for rating. |
| **Strategy #5** | **High || Medium || Low || Nil**Description/justification for rating. | **High || Medium || Low || Nil**Description/justification for rating. | **High || Medium || Low || Nil**Description/justification for rating. |

Table 3 - Strength of relationship between strategies and objectives

The subsections that follow explain in more detail how different strategies support different objectives.

## Strategy #1

Explain the particular of the strategy, focusing on how it contributes (where applicable) to each of the high-level objective.

## Strategy #2

Explain the particular of the strategy, focusing on how it contributes (where applicable) to each of the high-level objective.

## Strategy #3

Explain the particular of the strategy, focusing on how it contributes (where applicable) to each of the high-level objective.

## Strategy #4

Explain the particular of the strategy, focusing on how it contributes (where applicable) to each of the high-level objective.

## Strategy #5

Explain the particular of the strategy, focusing on how it contributes (where applicable) to each of the high-level objective.

# Content Tactics

Our tactics take the form of different content types, each of which supports one or more of the program strategies.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Description and Considerations** |
| **Content Type #1** | Describe the content type, relate it to the strategies, and mention any considerations (e.g., limitations, specific requirements, impacts to existing material, etc.) |
| **Content Type #2** | Describe the content type, relate it to the strategies, and mention any considerations (e.g., limitations, specific requirements, impacts to existing material, etc.) |
| **Content Type #3** | Describe the content type, relate it to the strategies, and mention any considerations (e.g., limitations, specific requirements, impacts to existing material, etc.) |
| **Content Type #4** | Describe the content type, relate it to the strategies, and mention any considerations (e.g., limitations, specific requirements, impacts to existing material, etc.) |
| **Content Type #5** | Describe the content type, relate it to the strategies, and mention any considerations (e.g., limitations, specific requirements, impacts to existing material, etc.) |

Table 4 – Descriptions of tactical content types and their relation to program strategies

## Twelve-Month Plan (High Level)

If we assume for a moment that the program objectives and strategies won’t change significantly over the next twelve months, then by **YYYY-MM-DD**, we will have:

* **Backward-looking statement of an achievement, new state of things, or result**
* **Backward-looking statement of an achievement, new state of things, or result**
* **Backward-looking statement of an achievement, new state of things, or result**
* **Backward-looking statement of an achievement, new state of things, or result**
* **Backward-looking statement of an achievement, new state of things, or result**

With that future in mind, Table 5 proposes a path forward.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **First Three Months** | **Next Three Months** | **Six Months and Beyond** |
| **Content Type #1** | Specific timeline, deliverables, goals/targets, considerations, dependencies… | Specific timeline, deliverables, goals/targets, considerations, dependencies… | Specific timeline, deliverables, goals/targets, considerations, dependencies… |
| **Content Type #2** | Specific timeline, deliverables, goals/targets, considerations, dependencies… | Specific timeline, deliverables, goals/targets, considerations, dependencies… | Specific timeline, deliverables, goals/targets, considerations, dependencies… |
| **Content Type #3** | Specific timeline, deliverables, goals/targets, considerations, dependencies… | Specific timeline, deliverables, goals/targets, considerations, dependencies… | Specific timeline, deliverables, goals/targets, considerations, dependencies… |
| **Content Type #4** | Specific timeline, deliverables, goals/targets, considerations, dependencies… | Specific timeline, deliverables, goals/targets, considerations, dependencies… | Specific timeline, deliverables, goals/targets, considerations, dependencies… |
| **Content Type #5** | Specific timeline, deliverables, goals/targets, considerations, dependencies… | Specific timeline, deliverables, goals/targets, considerations, dependencies… | Specific timeline, deliverables, goals/targets, considerations, dependencies… |

Table 5 - Timeline of program execution

# Measurements

Measurements help us to answer two questions:

1. Are we doing the right things? (effectiveness)
2. Are we doing the things right? (efficiency)

These two questions should be posed for every aspect of the program, and the answers should actively feed into decisions that impact program strategy and execution.

Measurements that don’t contribute to answering either of these questions can be dismissed from consideration; hopefully, this approach prevents the poison of vanity metrics and other wasted effort.

Ideally, we want to investigate leading metrics (rather than lagging), and ultimate measurements rather than proxies, but for some measurements we will have to make do with alternatives and best-guesses.

Note that there is often tremendous value in qualitative assessments, too, so let’s not ignore them.

## Measuring Objectives

Beginning with the three Objectives, Table 6 proposes a number of measurements and metrics as a starting point.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Effectiveness** | **Efficiency** |
| **Objective #1** | * Ask a question about something that indicates effectiveness?🡪 Measurement🡪 (proxy) Approximate measurement
* Ask a question about something that indicates effectiveness?🡪 Measurement🡪 (proxy) Approximate measurement
 | * Ask a question about something that indicates efficiency?🡪 Measurement🡪 (proxy) Approximate measurement
* Ask a question about something that indicates efficiency?🡪 Measurement🡪 (proxy) Approximate measurement
 |
| **Objective #2** | * Ask a question about something that indicates effectiveness?🡪 Measurement🡪 (proxy) Approximate measurement
* Ask a question about something that indicates effectiveness?🡪 Measurement🡪 (proxy) Approximate measurement
 | * Ask a question about something that indicates efficiency?🡪 Measurement🡪 (proxy) Approximate measurement
* Ask a question about something that indicates efficiency?🡪 Measurement🡪 (proxy) Approximate measurement
 |
| **Objective #3** | * Ask a question about something that indicates effectiveness?🡪 Measurement🡪 (proxy) Approximate measurement
* Ask a question about something that indicates effectiveness?🡪 Measurement🡪 (proxy) Approximate measurement
 | * Ask a question about something that indicates efficiency?🡪 Measurement🡪 (proxy) Approximate measurement
* Ask a question about something that indicates efficiency?🡪 Measurement🡪 (proxy) Approximate measurement
 |

Table 6 - Example measurements for determining program effectiveness and efficiency in pursuit of Objectives

## Measuring Strategies

Measuring our objective-oriented strategies is a considerable challenge, as they are a means to an end and, by their nature, are not especially compatible with counting measurements. Nevertheless, Table 7 proposes some possibilities.

Note: To determine relative effectiveness of each strategy in pursuit of the larger objectives, it might be worthwhile to normalize by the relative weightings outlined in Table 3.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Effectiveness** | **Efficiency** |
| **Strategy #1** | * Ask a question about something that indicates effectiveness?🡪 Measurement🡪 (proxy) Approximate measurement
* Ask a question about something that indicates effectiveness?🡪 Measurement🡪 (proxy) Approximate measurement
 | * Ask a question about something that indicates efficiency?🡪 Measurement🡪 (proxy) Approximate measurement
* Ask a question about something that indicates efficiency?🡪 Measurement🡪 (proxy) Approximate measurement
 |
| **Strategy #2** | * Ask a question about something that indicates effectiveness?🡪 Measurement🡪 (proxy) Approximate measurement
* Ask a question about something that indicates effectiveness?🡪 Measurement🡪 (proxy) Approximate measurement
 | * Ask a question about something that indicates efficiency?🡪 Measurement🡪 (proxy) Approximate measurement
* Ask a question about something that indicates efficiency?🡪 Measurement🡪 (proxy) Approximate measurement
 |
| **Strategy #3** | * Ask a question about something that indicates effectiveness?🡪 Measurement🡪 (proxy) Approximate measurement
* Ask a question about something that indicates effectiveness?🡪 Measurement🡪 (proxy) Approximate measurement
 | * Ask a question about something that indicates efficiency?🡪 Measurement🡪 (proxy) Approximate measurement
* Ask a question about something that indicates efficiency?🡪 Measurement🡪 (proxy) Approximate measurement
 |
| **Strategy #4** | * Ask a question about something that indicates effectiveness?🡪 Measurement🡪 (proxy) Approximate measurement
* Ask a question about something that indicates effectiveness?🡪 Measurement🡪 (proxy) Approximate measurement
 | * Ask a question about something that indicates efficiency?🡪 Measurement🡪 (proxy) Approximate measurement
* Ask a question about something that indicates efficiency?🡪 Measurement🡪 (proxy) Approximate measurement
 |
| **Strategy #5** | * Ask a question about something that indicates effectiveness?🡪 Measurement🡪 (proxy) Approximate measurement
* Ask a question about something that indicates effectiveness?🡪 Measurement🡪 (proxy) Approximate measurement
 | * Ask a question about something that indicates efficiency?🡪 Measurement🡪 (proxy) Approximate measurement
* Ask a question about something that indicates efficiency?🡪 Measurement🡪 (proxy) Approximate measurement
 |

Table 7 - Example measurements for determining Strategy effectiveness

## Measuring Tactics

Tactics, by their nature, are easier to measure, but care must be taken to measure what is meaningful. In general, for each type of content it’s useful for us to:

* Set goals (and periodically review them) in pursuit of content production
* Count the number of a type of content, to assess performance in pursuit of the goals
* Measure the cost of production (e.g., time, money) of each piece of content, so we can take action where possible to optimize

Measuring the ‘performance’ of a piece of content is challenging, given the large number of externalities. In general:

* Absent industry benchmarks, we should establish our own baselines and then work to improve them: for instance, track the average number of views each blog post receives in the first week of being live, with the goal of trending that upwards
* Wherever possible, work with averages and trends rather than small or singular samples: maybe a particular LinkedIn campaign performs poorly…but that might be due to distracting politics or some other externality rather than a reflection on some controllable element of the campaign

Being mindful of the larger program performance helps us avoid optimizing the wrong areas. For example, it’s quite easy to get extremely efficient at building a single type of content…so our counting stats and efficiency are off the charts. But how do we know that the effort – no matter how efficient – shouldn’t have been invested elsewhere?

We can tweak our relative investment between content types based upon the effectiveness and needs of the overall content program. For instance, maybe we discover that video demonstrations are enormously effective, while articles aren’t; in that scenario, it’s prudent to rebalance our investments in favour of video production. Alternatively, let’s say that in the first six months of the program we believe that we have effectively addressed 80%+ of buying barriers; it’s likely that we are now at a point of diminishing returns and should reallocate that effort to some other program element.

## Closing Comments on Measurements

Ultimately, we must not lose track of the purpose of measurements: to inform our decision-making in pursuit of the program objectives – if a measurement doesn’t serve that purpose, then it serves no purpose.

When considering the usefulness of a measurement, it is illustrative to ask oneself, *“What would we do if it was X? What would we do if it was Y?”*. If our course of action is the same, regardless of X or Y, then that measurement doesn’t hold much value.

# Appendix I – General Characteristics and Strategies

Implicit within this plan are a number of general characteristics and strategies intended to optimize the results.

## Top-Down/Objective-Oriented Discipline

This plan is designed as a top-down pursuit of company objectives. In practice, this means that we start with objectives; from there, we determine which strategies we can employ in support of these objectives; only after the strategies are established do we explore the tactics by which we can best implement the strategies. Failure to follow this disciplined approach (for instance, by starting with, or overly focusing on, particular tactics and ‘building up’ from there) will negatively impact the outcome, so should be avoided.

Furthermore, while we are wholeheartedly interested in trying things, exploring hypotheses, and learning from them (see the next few sub-sections), we must take care not to change related/connected variables simultaneously and we must avoid undirected experimentation. The former renders results that are difficult to interpret due to unclear causality, hampering our optimization efforts; the latter is a cause of distraction and further slows our learning.

## Iterate to Improve

We acknowledge at the outset that no plan is perfect, and we aspire to gradually optimize our plan; to do so, we’ll apply the Lean principle of Build-Measure-Learn:

* Build (and release) some content, via some channels
* Measure the performance related to objectives and hypotheses
* Learn some lessons

From there, we’ll refine our approach (e.g., reallocate digital investments, change the balance of content types, etc.) and repeat the cycle.

One variable to consider is the period of a cycle: too fast and we won’t have a large enough sample size from which to draw informed conclusions, too slow and we risk the opportunity cost of failing to adjust quickly enough. Moreover, as we become more adept at executing the build-measure-learn cycle, we can tighten the cycle period.

## Adapt when Necessary

Related to the Lean approach outlined above, effective plans account for externalities, unknowns, and lessons by being adaptable; that is, if new insights or ideas arise outside of the build-measure-learn cycle – or from any other source – then we’ll of course examine how they should be incorporated into the overall plan.

Things aren’t set in stone, and we won’t be stubborn about sticking to a plan that doesn’t account for reality.

## Use Information to Guide Decisions

Through research (e.g., conversations with customers) and a measurement-based feedback loop, we’ll gather information to inform our decisions.

For instance, we’ll need to determine (among other things):

* Are there industry publications (whether online or in print) that are widely read by our target markets?
* Are there conferences or other events in which we should participate?
* How does our target market research new solutions?
* How did our customers hear about our solutions?
* What barriers (real or perceived) prevent interested prospects from making a purchase?
* Etc.

The answers to these questions will allow us to approximately optimize our investments in content type and distribution.

Note that in the interest of velocity, we may choose to make a number of assumptions in regards to answering the questions posed above (and others), so that we may direct our early efforts. This approach is fine, so long as we still invest effort to validate or refute those assumptions and respond accordingly.

## Use a Two-Phased Approach

Rather than uniformly distributing the program budget across the entire project duration, it is likely to our long-term advantage to gradually ramp-up the investment for the first few months before establishing a steady state.

This approach will allow us to gain some valuable lessons (for instance, we could learn about relative channel effectiveness) and to fill in some knowledge gaps during the ramp-up phase to inform the monthly spending thereafter (e.g., rebalance channel investments, emphasize different messages, etc.).

Of course, if velocity is of paramount importance, then we can invest uniformly – but let’s do so knowing that the increased velocity comes at the expense of slightly lower efficiency.

## Optimize Content Production

We have many different types of content available for use in this program; broadly speaking, our content falls into one of two categories: written content and video content.

Written content could include, but is not limited to:

* **whitepapers** that provide education about a topic
* **technical showcases** that exposit upon our solutions
* **research reports** that reveal insights about the construction industry
* **case studies** that examine real-world customer results
* **success stories** that highlight real-world results without going especially deep
* **articles** that explore industry topics and that address subjects known, or expected to be, of interest to customers and prospects
* **solutions and use cases** that explain how we solve real-world problems
* **original research** that produces original insights and findings, some of which are expressed through or revealed within content (others are kept internally as proprietary industry knowledge)

Video content could include, but is not limited to:

* **demonstrations** that showcase how product features address customer problems, that answer common customer questions, etc.
* **training and onboarding** content that both help new customers accelerate time-to-value and that address prospect concerns about complexity and adoption challenges
* **customer testimonials** that reduce perceived risk by validating claims, value, etc.
* **project spotlights** that provide memorable and relatable real-world examples of projects that have benefited from our solutions
* **webinars**, both live and recorded, that can address a number of goals
* **overviews** that provide extra information (e.g., company overview)

We will assume that the messages within the content are consistent and cohesive: for example, regardless of format (e.g., a short article, or a demonstration video, a long whitepaper, etc. ), content will convey the same messages, using broadly the same language to highlight the same points, relating back to the same use cases and desired customer outcomes, and so on.

Strategically, our aim is to leverage content breadth in pursuit of our goals without succumbing to wasteful effort. This aim has a clear tactical implication: our content should be extremely purposeful, rather than be created just because we can. Furthermore, as we learn from our execution, those lessons should serve as feedback into the content generation to further refine our investments.

To summarize this strategic piece, we will endeavor to:

* Leverage a range of content types
* …in pursuit of specific outcomes
* …while constantly refining our production by focusing efforts on high-performing content types that are achieving their objectives

## Optimize Distribution Channels

Channels are the means by which out target audiences gain exposure to our content. Channels and content work together in pursuit of communications objectives: great content doesn’t mean anything if prospects can’t find it; great channels don’t matter if they expose poor content.

Channels include, but are not limited to:

* Our website
* Custom landing pages
* Organic search results
* Pay-per-click (PPC) campaigns, including retargeting
* Social media (e.g., LinkedIn, Twitter)
* YouTube
* Industry publications (digital and print)

In reality, channels often work together to achieve results. For instance:

* A prospect reads our article in a trade publication and manually visits our website
* A prospect sees a PPC ad on LinkedIn 🡪 clicking takes the prospect to a custom landing page 🡪 completing a form unlocks a piece of premium content
* A prospect conducts a search on Google 🡪 one of our videos hosted on YouTube is presented as a high organic search result 🡪 the prospect clicks through to YouTube 🡪 upon video completion, the prospect is directed to sign up for our upcoming
* A prospect sees a shared (or promoted) article on LinkedIn 🡪 clicking takes the prospect to our blog 🡪 within the blog is a video showcasing how a particular feature addresses a real-world problem

As with content, the challenge with distribution channels lies in optimizing their use: it would not be unexpected to discover that different channels are better suited to pursue particular goals rather than others. To that end, hypotheses should be tested and results should feed back into decisions that determine how channels are utilized.