

SMALL BUSINESS BANKER SERIES:

Complete guide to content marketing for small business banking

Here at The Small Business Company we've worked with banks and credit unions from all over the world. Our experience with small business content has given us a clear idea of what works and what doesn't. We've taken the best and presented it in this guide, so that you can get the most out of your marketing.

By Glen Senior, CEO, The Small Business Company
glen@tsbc.com, thesmallbusinesscompany.com
linkedin.com/in/glenseniior

© Glen Senior 2023. All rights reserved. This document is protected by copyright. Reproduction and distribution of the material without written permission of the author is prohibited.

Overview

Welcome to the Complete Guide to Content Marketing for Small Business Banking. Content marketing has become an increasingly effective and efficient way to engage and attract new clients to banks and to assist existing clients to succeed in their businesses. By providing well-written and informed content, you establish your bank as a leader on topics important to your clients, which allows them to see your value and expertise.

This enables you to create new connections and expand awareness of your bank, making you the go-to source on matters your small business customers and members care about.

That means they'll seek you out when they need your services and are more likely to recommend you to others.

To get content marketing right you need a strategy that helps you decide what topics will resonate with customers, who will write this content, how to manage the on-going creation and where to publish the final product. You'll find out more about that in the following pages of this guide.

In this guide...

- » Understanding content marketing
- » Why financial institutions need content marketing
- » Building a successful content marketing strategy
- » Types of content marketing
- » Identifying content your audience will love
- » Bringing your content marketing plan to life

Understanding content marketing



Key points

- » **Content marketing involves publishing valuable, relevant content to attract and engage new small business customers, while supporting the growth and eventual exit of existing.**
- » **It can take many forms, from web content, interactive tools, templates, social media and training.**
- » **The goal is to build a relationship with your audience so you become their go-to for information and guidance.**
- » **Well-written, informative content differentiates you from competitors.**

Content marketing is valuable, helpful content that appeals to the needs, motivations, and interests of your target audience, that is published where your prospective customers will see it, such as your website, social media, or emails. You provide high-quality content that new and existing customers read and interact with as they need it.

Content marketing can come in the form of:

- » Articles
- » Blogs
- » Whitepapers
- » Case studies
- » Video
- » Infographics
- » Tools
- » Templates
- » Calculators
- » And many other types of content.

Some examples of content marketing include an article on current government small business grants and subsidies, a whitepaper that predicts future economic trends, an infographic on why exchange rates fluctuate, cash flow and business plan templates, or a blog on three ways to raise capital in a crisis.

The objective is to get existing clients to read your material, which then triggers them to contact you for more financial services, directing qualified leads your way.

If content is placed on your website, content marketing will also improve your SEO (search engine optimization), making it easier for leads to find you organically in search results. One of the biggest advantages of such organic content marketing is it allows your target audience to find you at a time and place that they're specifically looking for help or information.

Here's how content marketing can function when people search for answers online:

- » A business owner has an important question (how to work through a cash flow crisis)
- » They type this question into a search engine
- » You have a specific article that covers this topic, and your article is ranked on the first search page
- » The owner links to your website and finds even more resources about relevant topics
- » They reach out to you to book an appointment because they now see you are empathetic to their issues and have products that may help.

If your content marketing is shared on social media, you give your prospects an opportunity to interact with your customers and with you. You can encourage activity and discussion about the topics you share, and respond to questions from customers or prospects directly. Your social media can also promote your content, encouraging people to visit your website to learn more about you or about a specific topic. Feedback you receive through social media can also be used to drive your content.

How content marketing is used

The goal of content marketing is to differentiate you, building trust with readers so when they need your services--or if they know of someone who needs your services--they'll think of you first. It showcases your value and sets you apart from others, which in turn leads to new clients reaching out to you.

It's not pitching and selling your products or talking about how
great your financial institution is.

Best practice content marketing solves the business needs of customers first, product
second

Why financial institutions need content marketing



Key points

- » **Content marketing is a cost-effective and efficient way to target your ideal customers**
- » **It keeps you in control of how your small business banking grows**
- » **Once you've developed your process, the cycle is repeatable**
- » **Your audience can find you online, any time they want and from anywhere.**
- » **Benefits of content marketing include building your brand, establishing relationships and expanding awareness of your bank**
- » **Increasingly bankers are in an advisory role. Content helps them have better conversations, where they can share content, templates and tools with their customers.**

Just about every business need banking advice and products at some stage, which gives business bankers an advantage when it comes to content marketing. You have an existing audience and expertise in things they want to know about (finance, cash flow, profit, international payments and cash management). You're in a prime position to serve up helpful expertise in terms your audience will understand.

Financial services are in high demand, and it is a competitive industry. You need to keep your institution visible to help you win new clients. Content marketing gives you control over your strategy by enabling you to choose the channels you use, the clients you target and the expertise you share.

Further, with digital connectivity your clients aren't restricted by geographical boundaries or time when it comes to choosing who they bank with. You can therefore target and service business customers from anywhere in the country, whenever they're looking for advice.

Content marketing is perfect for the banking industry because:

- » You can create a single piece of content once, and then circulate it everywhere
- » Small businesses are hungry for help and often search outside normal business hours
- » It's not complicated and doesn't take a lot of special know-how to get started
- » It's typically less costly than traditional advertising and is more highly targeted
- » When it's done well, the cycle is repeatable
- » Many business owners don't like admitting they need assistance, so an anonymous search online for answers is often their first step.



Content marketing provides on-going help to customers 24/7, when it's convenient for them.



Additionally, the value of your content marketing compounds over time. A piece of content might generate 400 hits and 10 loan enquiries in the first month, but by month 12 that same piece of content could generate 4000 hits and 100 loan enquiries. Further, the more content you have, the more value you get from your content.

Building a successful content marketing strategy



Key points

- » **Successful content is written for your target audience**
- » **See where there are broader “pillar” topics that you can cover and then break into smaller pieces to make the writing more efficient**
- » **Use topic clusters to identify all the potential ways you can break down a general topic.**

There is so much content available on the internet already, ensure yours stands out. Like just about every strategy in business, it starts by understanding your ideal clients: their needs, motivations, pain points and desires.

Who your content is for

Be clear on who your content needs to reach. Who are your ideal customers? It's likely that you might have several customer 'personas' that you need to cater to (start-up, exporter, commercial, micro-business, agribusiness, those seeking to exit). Map out the things that matter to them most (key pain points), what kind of challenges they face, or the main objectives they want to achieve.

Where they look

Content marketing is only as successful as your distribution strategy. Think about where content needs to be published for them to find it. A multi-channel approach is generally best (website, social media, send direct, advertise) to leverage the different channels to lead visitors back to your website from several touch points.

What they ask for

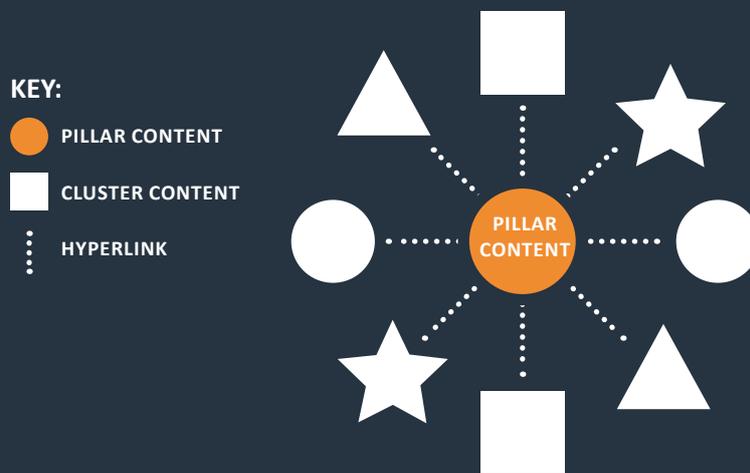
To get visitors to your site, you need to understand the kind of content they're searching for online. Identify the keywords and key search terms they use such as 'raising capital', 'small business finance', 'starting a business', 'small business bank', 'how to get paid for exports' etc. Then map out content in line with the topics that are going to provide the most value for your audience – we call these pillar pages.

Developing content types

Pillar content strategy

A pillar content strategy works by creating two types of content: the first is a pillar page, which is a broad overview of a specific topic. The second are more in-depth pages that go specifically into certain topics mentioned on the pillar page. One pillar page can result in multiple cluster pages.

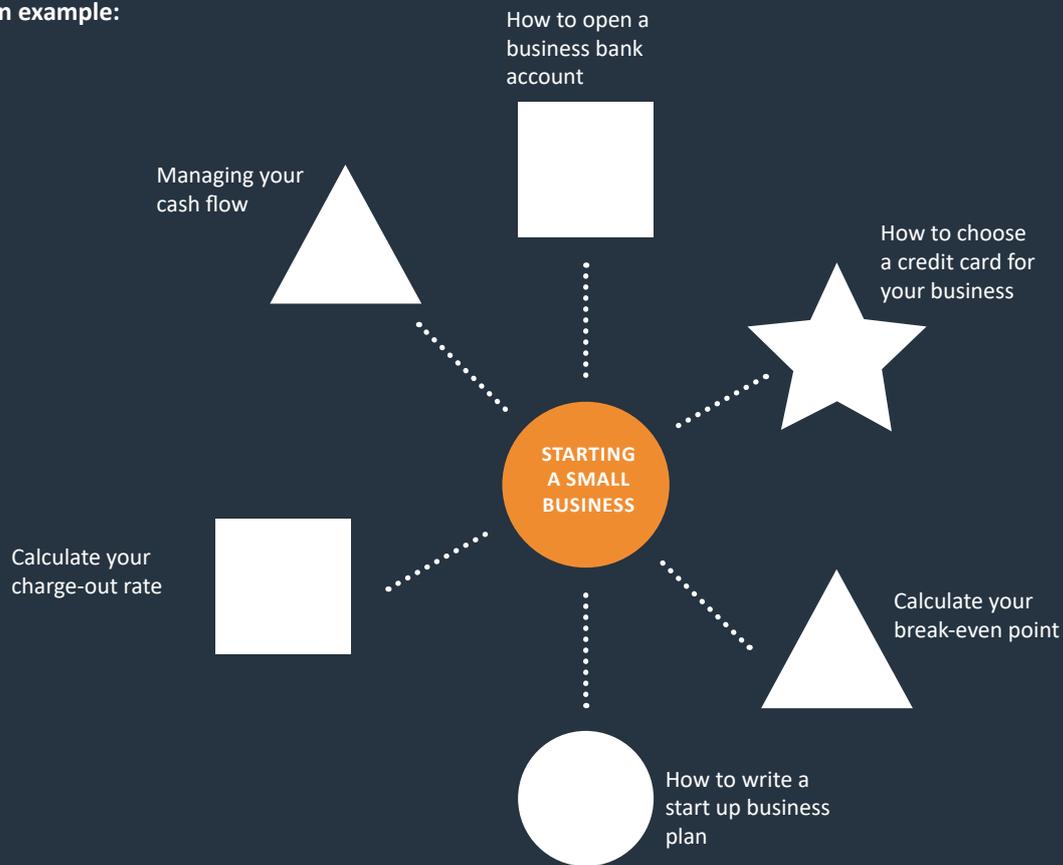
A good example from the banks is this page on [Business Resilience](#) from HarborOne Bank or [Starting a business](#) from Royal Bank of Canada.



For example, you might have a pillar piece of content about ‘Starting a small business’, then create a list of relevant topics that this page can link to, such as cash flow and business plan templates, loan calculators, or a startup checklist. Use your understanding of your audience and keyword research to guide you with what topics are going to be most relevant.



Here is an example:



You might also hear pillar topics referred to as content categories, or content buckets. Aim for 3 to 5 topics to start with, with your cluster topics branching off from there, within these 'buckets'.

Search engines are solely focused on serving up the most relevant content to searchers, and therefore they reward content that is organized by topic, not keywords.

A topic-first approach:

- » Improves your SEO rankings through a site architecture that makes it easier for search engine bots to discover
- » Creates a better user experience for your audience, making it easier for them to find relevant information
- » Grows brand trust and credibility through a library of insightful information
- » Helps you segment your audience so if a lead enquiry comes from a specific piece of content, you should have a better idea of the kind of help they need most.

Generating Leads

The best content marketing strategy to generate qualified leads uses a curriculum to ensure the content is right for your customers, is aligned to your sales channel, matches your voice and brand guidelines, and is amplified in your business channels or customer ecosystem.

LEAD GENERATION

Build a Curriculum

- » Outline targets
- » Identify triggers/pain points based on needs
- » Align to products
- » List SEO driven content that matches the above criteria
- » Determine success criteria/ROI

Align to Sales Channel

- » Enable a customer contact strategy and execute
- » Send content in newsletters
- » Provide to bankers refer into networks
- » Seed content into social
- » Match the current user experience

Create Content

- » Create content to match brand and customer voice
- » Created gated content that requires registration
- » Develop different vehicles to engage (articles, blogs, templates, calculators, video, infographics, tools)



Generate qualified leads into your sales channel

Supporting your small business customers with targeted practical business content to help them solve their current pain points.



STRATEGY ALIGNMENT

Amplify

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Syndicate content into the support channel » Run workshops » Offer webinars » Hold competitions » Send an e-newsletter » Give to branches/call center | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Use as on-boarding tools » Seed across product web pages » Deploy in social media » Use as case studies and 'heroes' » Train front line » Engage the accounting sector |
|--|---|

Why add expert small business content to your website

A vehicle to advisory

Bankers increasingly are being asked to offer advisory support to customers. Business content gives them:

- » A reason to make contact
- » A way to have a conversation that doesn't start with product
- » An opportunity to build customer financial and business literacy
- » Thought leadership information to demonstrate expertise
- » Content to assist on-boarding

Generate organic search

Provide content to your targets to drive traffic by:

- » Creating a small business resource center or hub inside your site
- » Seeding content into your social media channels
- » Adding single pieces of content into product pages at point of need
- » Providing high search volume tools (calculators, templates, diagnostics)
- » Match the current user experience

Trigger leads

How well you spend your marketing budget is by lead generation. Obtain small business leads by:

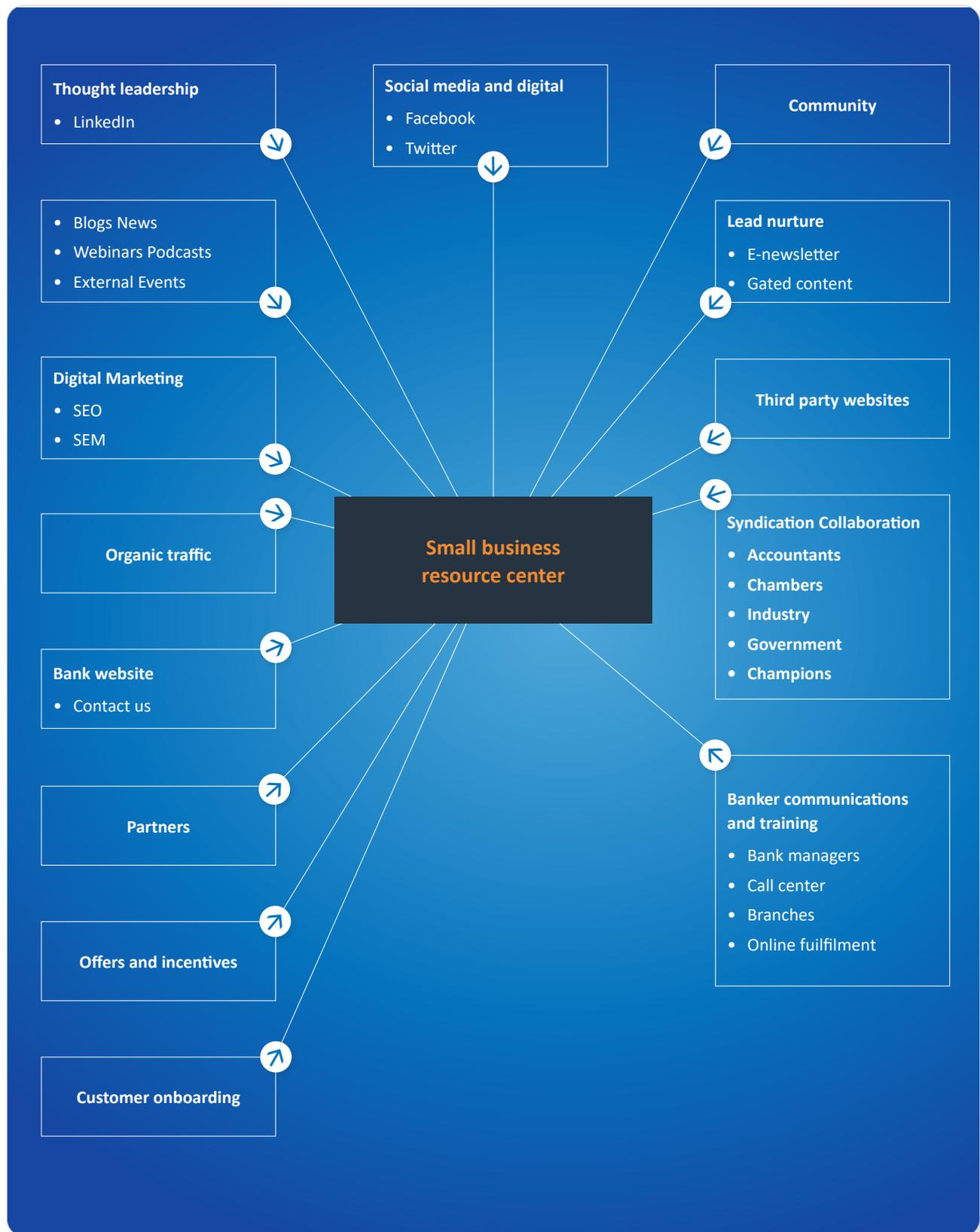
- » Using gated content to collect prospects and re-market
- » Embedding calls to action into content inside product pages
- » Syndicating content into social media, e-newsletters, blogs
- » Giving branded content to partners (accountants, industry groups, SCORE, state government)

Support customers

Lock in existing customers by helping them start, run, grow and exit their business by:

- » Offering practical self-help templates and tools
- » Providing a range of support that matches their lifecycle stage
- » Enhance existing comm's such as webinars, e-newsletters, social media and web content

Amplification ecosystem



Types of content marketing



Key points

- » **Consider adding regularly updated content to keep content fresh. Here is where unique content based on your institutions footprint is ideal**
- » **Adding high value content (interactive PDF's, checklists and videos) can encourage some to register to receive**
- » **Interactive tools like calculators, health checks and online business planners increase engagement and time on site.**

1. A regularly updated blog or article

Consistent, fresh content gives your audience a reason to regularly engage with your website, and it attracts those search engine bots to improve your SEO, making you more easily found online. Although the thought of posting regularly can feel overwhelming, with a content plan you'll be surprised at how many topics you're inspired to cover. Aim for at least every two weeks or once a month.

2. 'Hero' content

Hero content is all about achieving reach and brand awareness. It's a piece of content that requires a bit more investment in because it's designed to attract a wide audience and create impact. This could be a video, a whitepaper, an online course or a big-ticket campaign, designed to attract a larger number of viewers and leave a lasting impression.

- » This guide you're reading right now is one of The Small Business Company's 'hero' content pieces.
- » To come up with your 'hero' content, you should think about the things your ideal client really cares about. What is the source of their pain or stress? What keeps them up at night?

3. A downloadable takeaway

A simple, guide, template or resource will gives website visitors extra value and it gives you an opportunity to capture their email address, so you can follow up or add them to your database for future communications. Examples include checklists, online business planning tools, key segment guides (like 'Ten ways to start a business' or 'Five ways to improve profit' PDF's).

Additional content topic strategies

- » Track leads and identify which content on your site gets the most traffic or queries, provide similar content
- » Constantly ask customers what their main issues are and use these topics to write blogs that solve their pain points
- » Check out your competitors and other banks to see what they're covering
- » Write about the latest news in your target clients' industries.

The advantages of these strategies are:

- » You're creating content about actual pain points and challenges business owners face
- » If your customers have these issues, you can assume other business owners will
- » Writing about them positions you as an expert, and as someone they can trust
- » The content has longevity – we call it “evergreen content” in the marketing world
- » Your content could be ranked by search engines, sending traffic and potential leads your way
- » You can repurpose the content to amplify it. For example, you can make videos on the same topics and then post them to social media. Or you could compile all your posts into an e-book called something like “The most common questions that business owners ask their bank.”

If that still sounds like too much work, consider a Business Content Library subscription from The Small Business Company. The library is full of articles, templates, checklists, videos and other white label content you can download and use.

4. Helpful tools

Tools such as business planning templates, cash flow or profit tracking spreadsheets or loan calculators are all resources that your customers can use. These kinds of tools help your visitors act and get an immediate outcome, so they are a great resource for getting new leads and increasing engagement on your site.

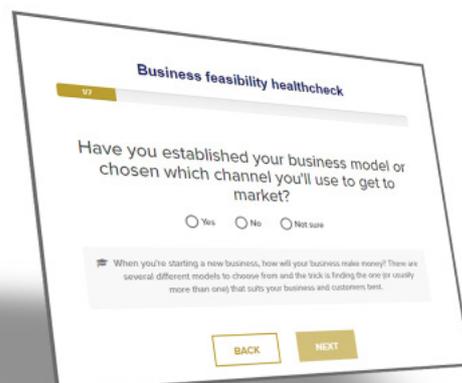
5. Social media

Social media helps you build relationships with a wider audience and is an important channel for drawing new leads to your website.

You don't have to be on all social media, but it's worthwhile to be on the platform that your clients engage with. Popular social media platforms include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram.

As with your content, consistency with your posting, messaging and design is key. Social media is a chance to create value with your followers, and show the human side of your business- the people, the behind-the-scenes, the small business customers you support and the values that drive your brand.

You can use social media to generate blog topics, too. Ask your followers what questions they have about banking or finance.



Identifying content your audience will love



Key points

- » **Continue experimenting with new forms of content, such as videos, webinars, events and surveys to see what else works with your target audience**
- » **Remember that marketing trends are constantly evolving, so you'll need to review your strategy regularly to ensure it's still as effective as you need.**

Content marketing is a moving and ever evolving strategy, and keeping up with content trends is important. If budget and resources allow, here are some content extras that your audience will love.

Engaging video

Video is an engaging and memorable way for your target customers to interact with and get to know your brand. It's also highly shareable, increasing the chances that your brand will reach new audiences. Use video to showcase your brand story, case studies and financial literacy education.

Webinars

Webinars are a chance to inform your audience. They add value, build trust and establish credibility. Webinars are especially beneficial in the lead up to the launch of a service or campaign.

Events

If you're not restricted by geographical inconvenience, events continue to be an effective way to market your bank and showcase your support. Invite your existing customers to a presentation, bring in an expert speaker they want to hear from, partner with businesses who invite their business customers, so you can each leverage your networks and connections.

Surveys

Surveys give you a fantastic opportunity to reach out to current and potential customers.

Once you have a solid number of respondents, write up an informative report on trends you noticed in the responses and your analysis of those trends. Send that report to everyone who participated in your survey, people on your email list and even connections on social media.

Bringing your content marketing plan to life



Key points

- » **A content marketing calendar keeps you accountable for creating content**
- » **You can delegate content marketing tasks to your team so the bulk of responsibilities isn't on you, or you can work with an outside party to provide content**
- » **Keep your calendar flexible, so if something important pops up that you want to write about, you can easily adjust.**

Once you've brainstormed your ideas for pillar and cluster content, it's time to map them out into a calendar.

Your content calendar is important because it keeps you accountable for producing the content. In creating the calendar, you'll be considering when and how often you want to post on various platforms, what you want to post about and who is responsible for creating the content.

It takes a bit of time to set up the calendar at first, it makes implementation of your marketing plan easier. You can also schedule time ahead for seasonal posts--such as important information at tax time -- so you don't forget about them. It helps you schedule your time, so you know in each week how much time you need to spend on marketing activities.



Here are some things to keep in mind:

When	Decide how often, and when, you want to publish your content. Consider when themes are most topical by thinking about the business calendar, seasonal influences or special events, and map these themes out over your year.
How	Bring each of those themes to life – align your keyword-led topics for each month, so you know what each piece is going to be about, and write a brief overview of what can be included.
What	Identify the kind of content – an article, checklist, template, video, or whitepaper – and therefore what additional resources might you need (video, graphic design, a copywriter).
Who	Outline who needs to be involved. It can be helpful to spread content creation across your team, so decide who will be responsible for managing each piece, or sub-contract the writing to a freelance writer (or use our Business Content Library’s content).
Where	Think about where you will publish and deploy your content, and therefore what else you need to do, to ensure your content reaches the right people.

While there are several online tools, a simple spreadsheet is a good place to start.

Your content calendar doesn’t have to be set in stone; it should flex to topical themes where needed. It’s worth checking in with your content plan every quarter, to ensure the content you’ve mapped out is still relevant and scheduled for a time when it can have its best impact.

If this all seems overwhelming, start with one piece of content a month on a topic you know will resonate, place it on your website and amplify it in your channels.

To conclude

Great content has the power to grow your audience, generate loyal followers, improve your SEO presence and position your financial institution as a trusted business thought leader.

- » Add useful content to your website that aligns to your core business (cash flow, start up, tax, strategy, business planning, funding)
- » Amplify this content by placing it in as many places as possible. A single article on cash flow could be in your website, sent to customers in an e-newsletter, printed, cut and used as social media posts, profiled inside LinkedIn, or syndicated to your own partners

Banks are increasingly having to position their business and offer more than loans and financial advice. As online services make it easier and easier for small businesses to open accounts and access funds (and it's likely to get even easier still), being able to segment the market and focus on a niche is more likely with an expert content led strategy to differentiate you from the pack.

Finally, the option between creating content internally or getting help

Writing and building your own content marketing assets requires in-house expertise and it is a time commitment you may not have.

We've made it easy for banks to source and publish quality content that they know their audience will love, from our [Business Content Library](#). Every two months we add new content of relevant and relatable small business- specific content, written by business experts. Articles, social posts, calculators, hero guides, templates and more are all available at your fingertips to get your own content marketing machine cranking.

Or do both, use an external provider for the hard parts, internal writers for localized content.

Want to know more?

Contact Glen Senior now glen@tsbc.com

www.thesmallbusinesscompany.com

www.linkedin.com/in/glensenor/

MORE ABOUT THE SMALL BUSINESS COMPANY

We provide strategic advice to bank marketing and small business teams that are seeking to engage, educate and assist their small business customers. We do this by working alongside bank staff to develop a Content Strategy, and then provide the content for banks and credit unions to place inside their website, social media and other media channels. Content examples include articles, guides, templates, video, online calculators, templates, infographics and interactive tools.

See more at www.thesmallbusinesscompany.com