

**big<sup>★</sup> star content**

Putting content first

**12 STEPS TO  
CONTENT SUCCESS**

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Derryck has nearly 20 years experience as a writer working in PR, marketing and journalism. He set up Copywriting Devon in 2005 and, after growing into one of the leading content creation companies in the UK, rebranded as Big Star Content in 2010.

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Steve has 13 years of experience of website copywriting and Internet marketing, and has worked at several top international and UK advertising and digital agencies. During that time, Steve was extensively involved in training and teaching website copywriting at the University of British Columbia, as well as for many corporations, government agencies and small businesses.

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Graeme has a wide-ranging and extensive knowledge of wine and spirits acquired through an 18-year career. He has delivered extensive marketing strategy and content plans for leading global spirits companies and created and written the complete brand stories and training programs for both Martini and Jagermeister, and worked extensively on the brand and drinks history of Bacardi.

## Introduction

### 12 Steps to Content Success

In this free e-book, we will discuss the methods and techniques of making your business' content succeed online.

These steps, or methods, are not necessarily meant to be followed from 1 through 12. Feel free to dip in and out – although, we would recommend you sort out 1-3 first before you undertake the later steps.

This is because having a solid idea of what your business stands for, and how it communicates with the world will ensure you are crafting straightforward content. In addition, spending time on a strategy for publishing it all will save you time and money (and headaches) later on.

*“I now have something concrete to work with, a direction for the content of the two sites and a really solid plan. It literally does give us the platform on which to build our web strategy.”*

John Briggs, General Manager Sales and Marketing,  
Hospitality Line Group

### It's in our DNA

These 12 Steps are also the foundation of our business. They represent the way we think about successful content, and how to go about creating it.

While you enjoy this e-book, we are madly working away to expand this content into a full-blown learning tool that will go into much more depth about each of the concepts and how to do the tasks in each step.

We hope you enjoy this e-book, and would love to hear what you think. If you have any ideas, comments, praise, or criticisms, please do let us know.



### Get in touch

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# 01. Brand Story

*Before you go off and start creating a stream of content, it helps to know something about who you are, what you stand for and how you will speak to the world around you. In this first step we discuss a technique we use to uncover the heart of a brand and give you interesting, engaging and effective content for your audience.*

## What is a brand story?

Brand story is hot at the moment, in marketing buzz they call it “intrinsic communication”. It is the distilled essence of a brand, the factors that make your product or service unique: heritage, production techniques, people and skills, awards and accolades, or ingredients, for example. These are tangibles that together form the building blocks of your brand, product or service.

Go and look in and around your brand and its position in your sector. Find out everything you can about it, every little fact and figure you can compile. The skill then lies in weaving what you have found into a compelling and interesting story. Keep the technical stuff for later. Decide what is really going to make a consumer sit up and say “I didn’t know they did that”.

Brand story is an extremely powerful strategic tool. It’s about identifying and communicating a powerful and distinct identity that builds deep, long-lasting and value-creating relationships with your consumers . At a practical level it can increase your customer share, boost your bottom line and secure the long-term development of your business.



### Find the right story

To create a meaningful brand story, focus on answering specific questions about your brand.

These might include:

- **Your voice** - how are you going to speak?
- **Your heart** – what messages will always be with you?
- **Your personality** – how do you get people to listen to what you have to say?
- **Your social skills** – how do you make new friends and tell them new things?

## 02. Brand DNA

*In the process of creating your brand story you will have analysed all the features of your brand and made decisions as to what you feel is really important and really worth telling. This is your DNA , and like the biological equivalent, it will form the basis of who you are.*

From the brand DNA you then need to make some key decisions. In your market, in your trading environment what really counts? What will really make the difference to the purchasing consumer? These are your the core messages and they are central to all headline communications. They should be short, to-the-point and with high recall power.

### How do I know what my core is?

Core messaging is tricky (ad-men get millions to get this one right!), but a technique we have found successful uses three pillars that directly influence purchase behavior in your customers: Quality, Authenticity and Credibility.

Your customer might be asking:

“How do I know this is Quality?”

“How do I know this is Genuine?”

“How do I know my choice is Credible?”

Understand these motivators and focus your core messages on answering your customers’ questions.



### Build your DNA

- **Be memorable** – focus on what makes your brand memorable.
- **Target your customers** – what are they interested in? Does your brand deliver a clear, intrinsic value?
- **Clarify, not confuse**– simple, clear, engaging, with answers to their key questions
- **Build headlines** – so consumers instantly engage with your core messaging
- **Be used consistently throughout your communications** - DNA statements ensure you are always on message. That consistency makes it easier for your customers to understand who you are and why they should buy from you and not your competitors.

## 03. Content Strategy

*By now, you should have a clear picture of how your brand communicates – what it sounds like, and the things it says about itself. Where Steps 1 and 2 were about defining and creating a voice for your brand, Step 3 is about setting out how you will implement your content across all the channels you decide to engage in.*

### How to tell your story to your audience

Content. The creating, managing, reviewing, updating, storing, revising and sharing of it is one of the most time consuming aspects of your marketing. You probably realise the value of it, but like many businesses just don't know how to go about managing all this 'stuff'.

Just as you have a plan for your business, your content needs a roadmap that defines where you are going and how you'll get there.

Defining a content strategy sets out how you will create, share and police your content both on your website and off. It should help you understand why you create your content at all and why your customers will care about it.

Your strategy output should be divided into 2 parts and include the output of all your work so far.

**Content Definition:** brand story, brand DNA (key messages), tone and language (from brand story), audience, key subjects, and the goals of each type of content you plan on producing.

**Implementation:** how to write, when, where. Schedule your tasks to keep you focused throughout the year.



### Set the strategy

A few things you will need to decide:

- **Promoting your content** – you shared some valuable information that will genuinely help your customers. Now tell people. Will it be through social media, email or a combination?
- **Sharing** – what are you willing to give away for free and what are you keeping proprietary?
- **Frequency** – how much time do you have to invest in creating content? What can you support? Make changes to your staff or outsource.

## 04. Style Guidelines

*Now that you have set your strategy, it is time to start publishing content. The first piece of content you, as a business, should publish and share internally is a guide to why, how and what content you are creating. This gives all your content creators a strong start in creating the kind of content you want, and it gives you an easier way of providing clear feedback and constructive criticism of the content you receive.*

### Protect your words

Just like a design style guide protects your visual assets, copy style guidelines ensure consistency in your communications and protect your brand voice in your marketplace. The value of copy style guidelines is not only in the time saved for the writer in 'getting it right', the guidelines also act as a definitive source for your team to use in judging the quality and consistency of the content being produced for you – making sure you are getting value out of your content.

A good style guide will make it easier for content contributors and writers to create copy that is on brand, on message and consistent with existing copy. Where there are special circumstances or multiple audiences – often the case with websites – these should be clearly articulated within the style guide.

### What should copy style guidelines include?

Define every item that anyone would need to effectively write copy for your website, brochure or corporate newsletter: tone, voice, manner, terms used (like 'e-mail' or 'email'), page structures and many examples.



#### Where to begin?

If you are unsure what a good style guide looks like, or what kinds of content to include, take a look at some great examples we have found:

- [The Guardian style guide](#)
- [BBC News Styleguide](#)
- [Web Style Guide](#)

For more on editorial planning and style guides, see this excellent article at [Smashing Magazine](#).

## 05. Search

*How are your potential customers looking for what you offer? You need to know, because those words are what the Search Engine uses to show those customers your website in its listings. Use the wrong words, or different words, and you might not get to be in front of the people who already want what you have to sell.*

### Keywords, keywords, keywords

Search is all about keywords, and to succeed you need to understand which words people are using to look for what you have to offer, and where to use those words to help the search engines 'know' that your site has what that person is looking for.

For a quick bit of research, type your keywords into a search engine. Look at the results and, if you're searching Google, look at the bottom for 'related searches'. How many of your competitors are using those words? Does anyone from your industry even show up? What other words are they using? What are the related search terms (words)?

### Relevance

Beyond the keywords, you need to understand how people (and search engines) decide your website is relevant enough to visit (show it in the search results). Both look for cues in the content (relevance criteria) that let them judge how relevant your site is.

Read our article [What is SEO copywriting?](#)



#### Top SEO copy tips

Here are a few of the top pieces of content and places that you need to make sure you put the right keywords:

- **Title tag** <title>
- **Relevant headings** (H1, H2, H3, etc.)
- **ALT** attributes for images
- **Links** (both to this page from your site and links on the page going elsewhere)
- **Meta description** – most SEO experts recommend a well written description for your page.

## 06. Social Media

*Social media offers many new exciting opportunities to promote yourself, your content and show your expertise in a real and authentic way. Customers are increasingly turning to social media sources as a way of finding out more about companies and what they really stand for.*

### Who are you really?

**Back when you defined your brand story (you did that didn't you?), you spent time defining and deciding how you would make new contacts (friends, followers) and how you would tell them about new things that you discover, produce and think about.**

**These social skills make all the difference between confidently knowing what you stand for and communicating it easily to your audience and stumbling around in social spaces without any sense of the way you come across.**

### ★ Benefits of social media

- Traffic - It will drive traffic to your content/site
- SEO - It will increase back links to your site
- Awareness - It increases brand awareness among interested individuals
- Interaction - It allows you to interact directly with potential and existing customers
- Reputation - success on social media is like getting loads of personal recommendations
- Research - you can find out what people think of you, how they like to be contacted, what content they'd like to see etc. We can listen to the community and how best to interact with them.

[Here's a good video](#) about why you should be engaged with Social Media

## 07. Website Content

*In this Step, we focus on the kinds of content you have available in your repertoire to publish to your own website. This is by no means comprehensive, but represents the types of content that, in our experience, is the most productive for engaging with customers and generating leads and sales.*

### Writing for the web

It's a fact. People don't read on the web. But they still engage with our words, and knowing the techniques for writing more 'scannable' content will help you gain and keep readers. Here are 5 quick web writing tips to get you started:

1. **Format your content so that it is scannable.** Use bold or links to show key words, use subheadings to introduce new information and key words.
2. **Write concise, advantage and benefit driven content.** Try not to go overboard with superlatives. The shorter the content, the more easily the key points are picked up.
3. **Link to other content on your website and off.** Don't put everything on one page. The web is powerful because you can link to related ideas, products, and more information.
4. **Put the most important information at the top of the page.** Think news style (headline/summary).
5. **Update frequently.** Don't go 'dormant' online. Show up, everyday if you can.

### Home page content

This is your most important page for converting new customers – new visitors often go to the homepage to learn more about the brand. Use this page to tell your brand story and deliver the top line strands of your brand DNA.

### Product or service pages

These do the hard work of selling. But everything doesn't have to always be text. Sometimes, a video demonstration will do better than a long description. Do what works to convert your customers.



### Types of website content

- Guides (how to, all about, etc.)
- Blogs
- News
- FAQs
- Testimonials
- Downloadable content (white papers, case studies, podcasts, instructions)
- Non-text content (video demonstrations, audio guides, slide-shows)

## 08. Email

*Now we turn to an old friend, email. The content that you can produce for an email newsletter can be published on your website, making it shareable across the Internet. Email continues to be an effective channel for customer retention and is a proven strategy for delivering content regularly to your customers.*

### Turn your emails into sales tools

Highly effective and highly measurable, some companies have turned email marketing into an art form. Email newsletters allow you to access the people that are most likely to buy from you - people that have already bought from you. People that have already bought from generally spend more money with you than a new customer and an email newsletter can be an incredibly effective tool to sell additional products or services to them or reinforce your brand identity in a highly targeted way.

The alignment of customer need with a seamless chain of relevance that leads from keyword, to web page, to content, to conversion is as close to you can get to a recipe for success.

Read our article on [How To Write An Email](#)

### Be in it for the long-term

This is the steady drip-drip effect, the persistent mailing of high value, relevant content, and the segmentation and testing of what works and what doesn't. Smart email marketers know that it takes time to develop, but it's worth every minute.



#### Good content required

Don't forget these places when you are writing your email campaign:

- **Opt in:** Content can entice readers to sign up. Free reports, how to guides, etc.
- **Capture:** A nice, warm thank you and a little surprise go a long way: advice, introductory offer, discount, an unexpected bonus just for signing up.
- **Inbox:** Use best practices for creating subject lines that keep you out of the bins (spam and trash).
- **Body:** Be useful, or interesting, or amusing but make sure it's in line with your objectives. And don't forget to give your customers something act on.

## 09. Blogs

*It's the quality of your blog content writing that will inspire other websites to include your articles, your links and visitors to click through to your site. Nothing more, nothing less than quality counts. A good blog will generate the inbound links that you need to evolve trust and authority with your target audience.*

### Good content takes time

The best approach to developing articles of worth is to invest time and care into writing and creating the very best, expert articles in your niche. When Internet guru Jakob Nielsen talks SEO, SEO experts listen. He is firmly of the opinion that in-depth, detailed blog copywriting developed over a period of time by expert blog copywriters is of far greater value than more numerous, short, shallow 'my cat looks sad today' type posts i.e. blog article writing that's irrelevant to readers and to search engines.

We tend to agree. Writing informative, original, interesting and optimised articles of between 250 and 1000 words does get you noticed. Blog copywriting that's easy to read with content of genuine worth gets you followed.

Read our article on [How to write a blog](#)

Let your readers get to know you and your organization intimately, the closer you can get to your audience the better the experience for all. Engage your audience and interact.

Blog content writing is a conversation, speak to your readers, always keep them in mind and at the centre of everything: the topics you cover, the way you write, what you choose to include and what you omit. Make blog copywriting concise and scannable, format using bullet points and lists offering useful tips and advice.



### What to blog about

You want a blog, but aren't sure what to blog about. Try these starters:

- **Issues pertaining to your industry:** everyone loves to know your opinion. Tell them and show your leadership.
- **Blog about your product:** design and production are a good place to start. Your customers want to know you are working to solve their issues.
- **Industry insights and analysis:** give information that might not be available elsewhere. Share it and gain followers.

## 10. Articles and PR

*Online or offline, PR is almost essential to your business growth. Media coverage of your business or organisation can generate huge consumer interest. And as part of the search marketing mix, PR is invaluable. Good stories get picked up and published around the web, giving you hugely valuable links back to your site, as well as direct click-through from visitors looking to find out more.*

### SEO and article writing

Article submission is a key strategy in search engine optimisation. As with most things, with SEO article writing services, quality is more important than quantity. People actually read good quality articles and will frequently click through to the destination site if they find the article useful or interesting. They are also more likely to repost the article or link to it, giving you that all-important link juice to up your page rank.

Articles, especially in niche areas, can even rank for your search terms in their own right, leading customers directly to your site - if the quality of the article is good enough.

### Structure

For professional journalists, writing articles is as natural as breathing, but for the uninitiated developing an article's structure can be confusing. As with any story, a good article has to have a:

**Beginning** – the very first line of your article has to grab the reader's attention. The purpose of your intro paragraph is to draw the reader in and encourage them to read on.

**Middle** – Present your argument, facts, statistics and counter arguments. If there are two sides to a particular subject, present both in equal measure so that your reader has the opportunity to make up their own mind.

**End** – the conclusion of the article allows you the opportunity to sum up briefly the main body of the piece and also to present your own opinion (if you have one) on the subject.

## 11. (re)Generating content

*You have spent a lot of time and investment in getting good content written for your website: web pages, white papers, even slide-shows. In this step we focus on generating even more content with relatively little pain from the content sources you already have at your fingertips.*

### Re-using content

One of the first ways you can successfully start generating relatively low-investment content is to re-purpose the content you already own.

Taking your web pages, product sheets, or even sales presenters and turning them into other forms of content gives you endless options for getting the most out of your content. You might also find that your customers prefer one type of content over another.

### Inviting others to produce content

Once you have a following, you may find that others want to get involved too. If you have a widely respected blog, guest bloggers are a great way to get more content, often for free, and introduce other interesting viewpoints for your audience to enjoy.

### Getting customers involved

Allowing comments on your pages, putting up rating widgets, customer reviews, testimonials, and even inviting customers to submit their own ideas (recipes, designs, etc.) gives your customers a sense of ownership in the brand they like, and it gives you a steady source of highly relevant content that will work to convert your potential customers to buyers.



#### Turn the old into new

- Share presentations on a service like Slideshare
- Record yourself talking about your niche and post it on Youtube to share on your website.
- Make a video of how to use you product.
- Ask an expert in your industry to write a post for you.

## 12. Productising your content

*This last Step is the ultimate in content – making something back from the investment you have made in all the great information. Not every business can make this happen, but if you are creative, open-minded and ready to add something new to your business, productising your content can be a model that takes your content further.*

### Get something back

You have come a long way through the steps. You have created a compelling brand story, and formulated its DNA. You have implemented a strategy to generate and distribute your content to your audience. You have created content, of many sorts, all over your website and the internet. Now it's time to get a little back.

One way you can do this is by aggregating a series of your posts, or articles and content and re-writing them into an e-book. Priced accordingly, an e-book is a quick way to generate a little something back and to give your loyal readers a one-source place for all your great information. Conscientiously written, you can also provide your readers with new information that is only available through the book as an added incentive.

Here are a couple more ways you can productise your content:

### Information products

Content packaged together that contains a volume of highly desirable information is a hot commodity. What kind of information? Well, whatever your area of expertise is, there is someone willing to buy that knowledge from you. So write it down, video yourself talking about it, and package it up for those people.

### Training

You know a lot about your market, that's why you have been able to generate so much content and so many sales from your insights and expertise. Now take that content on the road and train others to do what you do. You might meet new customers along the way, and you might find a great addition to your team. You'll be sharing and getting something back for yourself in return.