


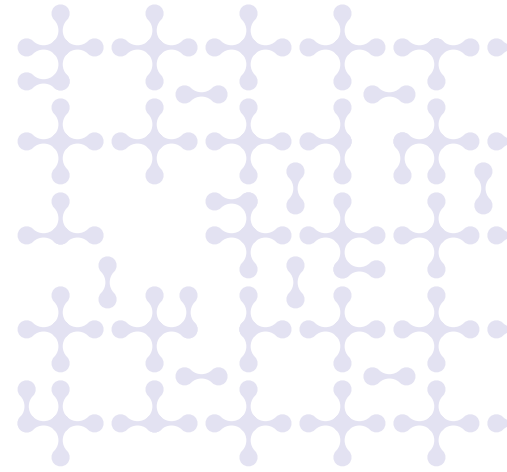


Use Creative Content
to Convince Online
Shoppers to Buy




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 The creative use of content can give e-commerce customers a unique and memorable shopping experience—one that creates powerful brand loyalty and convinces customers to buy.

Use Creative Content to Convince Online Shoppers to Buy

Introduction

The global number of e-commerce companies today is so enormous that few can put a definite number on it. Estimates range from 500,000¹ to more than 25 million.² At the same time, large retailers like Amazon and Walmart try to offer just about anything a customer could look for online. With so many businesses vying for consumers' attention, how can you, as an e-commerce merchant, attract customers to your site and convince them to buy? One important strategy is to offer value in the form of compelling content.

Content is a powerful tool that you can use to boost your brand and elevate your sales.


Your online presence needs to be about more than just the products you sell. It should be a resource for your users. It should be engaging, offering the unique photos, videos, comments and posts that shoppers won't get anywhere else. This content is a powerful tool that you can use to boost your brand and elevate your sales. More than 40% of marketers report that inbound marketing, including content such as blogs and social media, demonstrate positive return on investment for their company.³

There are many types of non-product content you can use to enhance your shoppers' experience, and ultimately lead them to a purchase. It is up to you to decide what will work best for your brand, and what you have the resources to commit to and cultivate. What follows are some tips and best practices, along with examples of retailers who are leading the pack in content marketing. These ideas address customers' needs, feature visual or emotional appeal, and truly help to generate sales. Read on, and get inspired!

Go Social

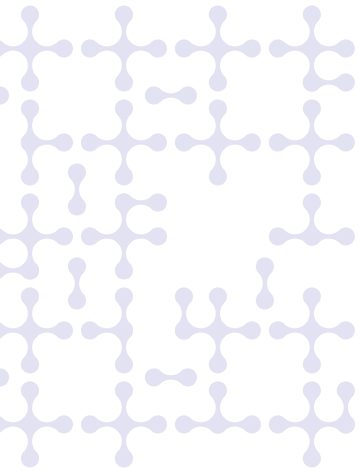
A social media strategy is practically a given for any online merchant these days. No matter your type of business or product, your customers are on some form of social media.⁴ Internet users in the United States and the UK spend an average of 32-35 hours per month online⁵ — much of it on activities like using social media, reading blogs, watching videos and shopping. Australians spend about 48 hours per month on the Internet. Nearly three-quarters (72%) of online adults reported using social networking sites. That's up from 67% in late 2012, according to data from the Pew Internet Project. So what is your company doing to reach all those potential customers?

The most important consideration is to leverage your social media in a way that aligns with the way your customers use it. If you have more fans on Pinterest than Twitter, then cater to those users with high-quality photo content that's perfect for Pinning. Update your feeds regularly, respond to customers' questions, and keep it fresh. Show that your social pages offer reliable, valuable content and it will compel users to keep coming back for more.

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Create original content for your various social media channels as well. Just because you're Tweeting doesn't mean you need to fit your whole message into 140 characters. Use teasers, links or images with taglines, which can lead to a landing page that features the full content⁶.

- 1 Estimated number of companies using e-commerce platforms. Wappalyzer. April, 2014.
- 2 Estimated number of global online retailers counting small and midsize online stores. Internet Retailer. October 2012.
- 3 2013 State of Inbound Marketing. Hubspot. 2013.
- 4 "Social Media Penetration Continues Nationwide," by Gavin O'Malley. Mediapost.com. August 5, 2013.
- 5 "Time Spent Online Statistics by Region and Type of Activity," by Brandon Gaille. BrandonGaille.com. May 6, 2013.
- 6 "Content Marketing for Ecommerce Merchants," by Dale Traxler. Practical Ecommerce. Nielsen. 2012.



In addition, you can integrate content from your social media networks into your main website. This is a great way to deliver more information to buyers and get them excited about purchasing your products. An example of a company that has done well with this is Adore Beauty, Australia's top online retailer for skin care, hair care and other beauty products. With more than 17,000 Facebook likes and more than 4,000 Twitter followers, Adore Beauty knows that it makes sense to bring its social conversations into its product search. When you use the search box on the adorebeauty.com site, you'll see related product results along with social media posts, discussions and articles related to the same search term.

Product Content

Products (154) Discussions (141) Articles (4) Social (27)

Search Results for **Opi > products**

Items 1 - 12 of 154 total Page: 1 2 3 ▶ Show 24 per page Sort by: popularity

Related Categories: [Opi Set](#) | [Nail Polish Remover](#) | [Liquid Sand](#) | [Opi Mini](#) | [Nail](#) | [Nail Polish](#) | [Opi Nail Polish](#) | [French Quarter For Your Thoughts](#)

FREE SHIPPING ON ALL ORDERS WITHIN AUSTRALIA

OPI Nail Polish - ALL COLOURS	OPI Nail Polish - Brights	OPI Touring America Collection	OPI Wipe-Off Acetone-Free Lacquer Remover Wipes (10)
★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
\$19.95	\$49.95 \$16.96	\$49.95 \$16.96	\$9.95
BUY	BUY	BUY	BUY

In the above example, when you do a search for Opi – a popular nail polish brand – you'll see the various Opi nail items sold by Adore Beauty. When you click on the Social tab you'll also see Adore's recent social media posts about Opi as shown in the image below. Click on the Articles tab and you'll see blog posts related to the same search term. The ability for a site visitor to quickly view additional relevant content about the product can pique interest and more likely result in a conversion.

Non-Product Content

Products (154) Discussions (141) Articles (4) Social (27)

Search Results for **Opi > social**

Page: 1 2 3 ▶

Related Categories: [Opi Set](#) | [Nail Polish Remover](#) | [Liquid Sand](#) | [Opi Mini](#) | [Nail](#) | [Nail Polish](#) | [Opi Nail Polish](#) | [French Quarter For Your Thoughts](#)

FREE SHIPPING ON ALL ORDERS WITHIN AUSTRALIA

	Katerina sparking in OPI's The Living D... Katerina sparking in OPI's The Living Daylights, from the Skyfall Collection! ▼
	Beauties!! OPI's The Man With the Golden... Beauties!! OPI's The Man With the Golden Gun 18k Gold Top Coat has landed! Go get your gold on http://bit.ly/RISfbc (image credit: extravaganzi.com)


Social content is especially important because it gives the consumer a window into how others are using the products they're considering purchasing. Some photos, videos or blogs might appeal to a consumer's practical decision-making by showing the quality and price of the item. Other posts might strike an emotional response, creating a desire for the item because it's fun or in-fashion. Either way, social content can be a strong influencer in motivating shoppers to buy.

Be a Blogger

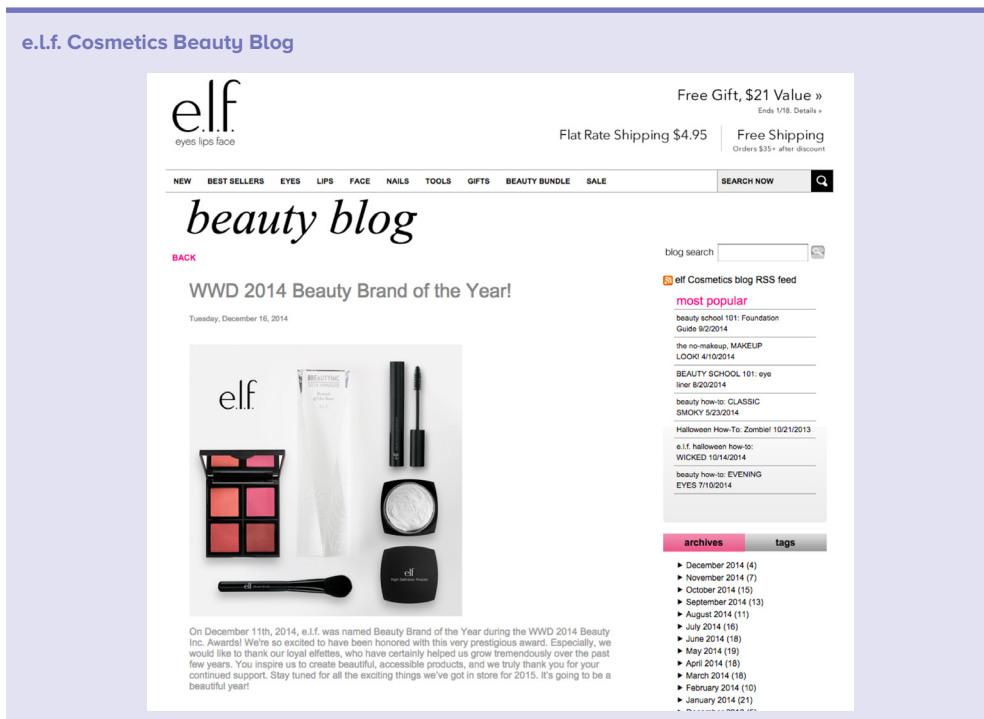
A blog is an excellent way to incorporate great non-product content while also showcasing your brand's individual voice. It can also generate some great organic traffic to your site, since search engines like Google and Bing rate quality, consistent content higher in the rankings. A relevant blog naturally improves your SEO. As search engines increase in sophistication, the days of stuffing blog posts with relevant keywords are over. When you create posts that are relevant to your brand, they will naturally place high in search rankings. It also follows that other sites will want to link to this useful content, increasing the reach of your blog posts.

According to 37% of marketers, blogs are the most valuable type of content for marketing. One study showed that companies with blogs get 97% more inbound links than those without blogs!⁷ It's clear that blogging is a proven strategy for increasing visitors to your site.

Although a blog can be a wonderful tool for posting announcements about new product releases and showcasing certain products, your blog shouldn't be strictly promotional. Use it to showcase what your brand is all about! Giving customers insight into your company helps shoppers feel like they can get to know your brand and what it stands for, which helps to create loyalty that will drive future sales.

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Take a look at the e.l.f. Cosmetics beauty blog for a prime example. This blog offers posts about a wide range of beauty topics, from how-to's to the popular Throwback Thursday trend. Many of these posts don't actually promote e.l.f. products, but provide fun insight or helpful information. It's a great strategy that gets readers coming back for the latest content, and eventually buying products. The celebrity-inspired looks, complete with links to the e.l.f. products needed to achieve them, are powerful posts for driving sales.



e.l.f. Cosmetics Beauty Blog

Free Gift, \$21 Value »
Ends 1/18. Details »

Flat Rate Shipping \$4.95 | Free Shipping
Orders \$35+ after discount

NEW BEST SELLERS EYES LIPS FACE NAILS TOOLS GIFTS BEAUTY BUNDLE SALE SEARCH NOW

beauty blog

BACK

WWD 2014 Beauty Brand of the Year!

Tuesday, December 16, 2014



On December 11th, 2014, e.l.f. was named Beauty Brand of the Year during the WWD 2014 Beauty Inc. Awards! We're so excited to have been honored with this very prestigious award. Especially, we would like to thank our loyal e.l.f.ettes, who have certainly helped us grow tremendously over the past few years. You inspire us to create beautiful, accessible products, and we truly thank you for your continued support. Stay tuned for all the exciting things we've got in store for 2015. It's going to be a beautiful year!

blog search

e.l.f. Cosmetics blog RSS feed

most popular

beauty school 101: Foundation Guide 9/2/2014

the no-makeup, MAKEUP LOOK! 8/10/2014

BEAUTY SCHOOL 101: eye liner 8/22/2014

beauty how-to: CLASSIC SMOKEY 5/23/2014

Halloween How-To: Zombie! 10/21/2013

e.l.f. halloween how-to: WICKED 10/14/2014

beauty how-to: EVENING EYES 7/10/2014

archives tags

- December 2014 (4)
- November 2014 (7)
- October 2014 (15)
- September 2014 (13)
- August 2014 (11)
- July 2014 (16)
- June 2014 (18)
- May 2014 (19)
- April 2014 (18)
- March 2014 (18)
- February 2014 (10)
- January 2014 (21)


7 The Anatomy of Content Marketing Infographic, by Karen Webber. Contentplus.co.uk. 2013.

Say Cheese

Text is great, but we all know what they say about words: A picture is worth a thousand of them! Be sure to use plenty of high-quality photos in your blog posts, emails and other sharable content. Photos make the content pop, and they make it more appealing for users to share. Whether they Pin it, Tweet it or post it on Facebook, social media users like to share good-looking photos.

According to research by Ipsos OTX, photos are the most popular form of content shared on social media. In a poll, 43% of users said they shared pictures on social media within the last month.⁸ If the pictures shared are your product images, just think of how many potential customers you can reach in a month!

Photos also offer a way to integrate products into a blog post. If the content relates to a product, place those product images in the post, then include a link to the page where an interested customer can purchase the item. Putting a photo in a blog post also makes it easier to spread that photo on social media, because when someone clicks to share a blog link, Facebook, LinkedIn and other social platforms will automatically place the main blog photo into the shared update. If there's no photo in your blog or social media post, you've missed an opportunity to catch the reader through visuals as well as content.

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Also keep in mind that it's important to make any product placements appear natural and unobtrusive. When in doubt, focus on the content first. This will help ensure that customers perceive your brand as a trustworthy resource that is interested in informing customers, not just in selling to them.

Use Standout Site Search

Implementing a content-rich site search is another great way to improve conversions on your e-commerce site. Often times, visitors arrive on a site to shop, but they don't know exactly what they need. These users may turn to the search function for help. A standout site search can go above and beyond customers' expectations, building loyalty and driving sales.

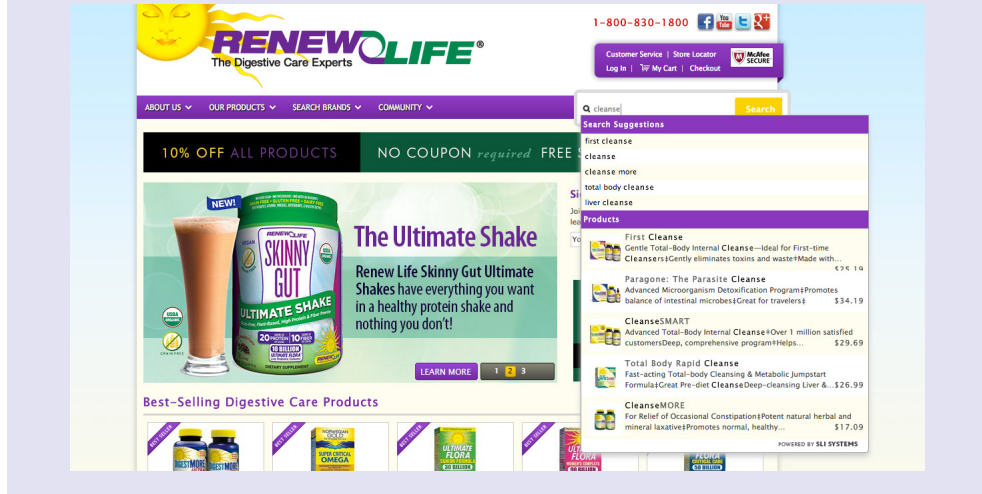
One of the latest best practices for site search is an advanced autocomplete function that can suggest search terms, categories and specific products – all right as shoppers type in the first couple letters of their searches. A drop-down from the search box, with thumbnail images, short descriptions and even price, are an eye-catching and quick way to find results. Visitors may not have known a site offers a particular product until it appears in that drop-down menu as they search.

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This type of autocomplete is especially powerful for retailers with products that don't lend themselves to very specific searches. Health and wellness retailers, for example, often have users search for conditions rather than specific products. ReNew Life is a great example. A search for "cleanse" offers up product suggestions for a variety of types of cleanses, along with other popular search terms.

⁸ Majority (71%) of Global Internet Users "Share" on Social Media Sites. Ipsos.com. September 17, 2013


Rich Auto Complete



Improved site search has allowed ReNew Life to grow sales in a big way. The conversion rate for customers who use site search is nearly 10%, more than four times higher than the conversion rate for users who don't use the search function. This rate increases incrementally when shoppers click on products or suggestions in the autocomplete drop-down menu.⁹ Results like that really speak for themselves, and for the power of a great site search.

Offer How-to Articles & Videos

Inform your customers not only about what your product is, but also about what it can do. Offering how-to articles, particularly in the form of nicely edited videos, display your brand's expert knowledge to users. When shoppers see that your company is an authority in the field, they will return to your site as a reliable resource again and again. Maybe they'll come for those valuable instructions, but they are also very likely to come back to make purchases.

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The Home Depot is a true leader in the how-to category, which makes sense, since most of their customers are looking to tackle some kind of project. Home Depot's e-commerce site offers project guides, how-to guides, how-to videos and more. Plus, it offers buying guides to help customers find all the products they need for their projects. By making its site into a one-stop shop for the products and the instructional information, the merchant has made itself a truly invaluable resource for its customers.

⁹ ReNew Life Press Release. SLI Systems. 2013.

How-to Article

The screenshot shows a Home Depot webpage for a 'How-to Article' titled 'How To Make an Herb Tower Container Garden'. The page features a video player showing a person in a blue shirt and yellow gloves working with a large orange pot. The article text below the video reads: 'Fill a few planters with herbs that will grow to become welcome ingredients for delicious meals. This easy and flavorful project shows you how.' Below the text is a link to 'Download a PDF of this project, and visit the Garden Club for more gardening projects!'. The page also includes a search bar, navigation links, and a sidebar with 'See Our Top Projects' and 'Related Content'.

How-to articles are valuable, but product videos can be even more influential in driving sales. In 2011, retailer StacksandStacks.com began testing both manufacturer-produced videos and original product videos for its web store. They found that a customer who viewed a product video was up to 144% more likely to buy the product than a customer who didn't watch a video. If your site doesn't feature videos, now is the time to add them. If you don't have the resources to create videos of your own, consider allowing user-generated videos on the site. Videos are a great way to add fresh content and increase engagement with your customers.

A great example of the power of how-to videos comes from ArtBeads.com, an online shop for beads and jewelry supplies. Videos are perfect for this retailer because they can show shoppers exactly how to create stylish jewelry looks with their products. In addition to the more than 125 videos on its YouTube channel, Art Beads also incorporates these how-to's into its e-commerce site, displaying links to the exact products viewers need to purchase to make the pieces shown in the videos.

How-to Video

The screenshot shows the Artbeads.com website for a 'How-to Video' titled 'Ceralun Epoxy Clay with Nick Regine'. The video player shows a close-up of a pink beaded necklace and a white container of Swarovski Ceralun Epoxy Clay. The video title is 'Arbeads Mini Tutorial - Swarovski Ceralun Epoxy Clay with Nick Regine'. The page includes a search bar, navigation links, and a sidebar with 'NEW IDEAS', 'THEMES & EVENTS', and 'JEWELRY IDEAS'. The main content area features a 'Related Products' section with images of various jewelry items.

Artbeads.com even took video a step further and integrated this content into its site search. The result? Over a four-week promotional period, conversions from search increased 30%, while overall site conversions rose 8.6%.¹⁰ Clearly, video is some seriously convincing content.

Share Recipes

A recipe is really just another type of how-to. If you're an online retailer that sells any kind of food or kitchen product, it is a no-brainer to add a recipe section to your e-commerce site. This type of content does double duty. It provides a how-to, offering your customers the experience of learning how to make a new dish. Plus, it's a way to showcase the value of your products and increase sales.

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By offering recipes, you present your company as an expert resource. Shoppers will keep your brand top-of-mind because they know they can rely on you. Take a look at this example from King Arthur Flour, which combines aspects of its community and knowledge base into the site, providing a wealth of recipes that are easily searchable. Visitors may find enticing recipes with high ratings, see that they have been pinned to Pinterest more than 1,000 times, and read reviews from other users who have made those dishes themselves. Of course, since customers can purchase the ingredients they need directly from the site, customers will want to buy those items and try out the recipes. And that's not just hypothetical; since integrating all this recipe content into its e-commerce search, King Arthur Flour has seen its conversion rate jump from 3.7% to nearly 6%¹¹ and its online revenue increase by 13%.

The screenshot shows the King Arthur Flour website's recipe page. The page is titled "Recipe" and features a navigation bar with links for "home", "about", "visit", "contact", "800 827 6836", "guest", "sign in", and "0 items in cart". The main navigation includes "SHOP", "RECIPES", "FLOUR MATTERS", "LEARN", "COMMUNITY", "VIDEOS", and "blog". The recipe page is for "joy's brown butter chocolate chip cookies with pecans" by Joy Wilson (Joy the Baker). The recipe includes a 5-star rating (17 reviews), a 20-minute hands-on time, a 12-minute baking time, and a total time of 1 hour 22 minutes. The yield is 2 dozen large cookies. The recipe is published on 04/21/2014. The ingredients list includes 1 cup (16 tablespoons) unsalted butter, 1 cup light brown sugar, 2 teaspoons vanilla extract, 1 teaspoon molasses, 1/2 cup granulated sugar, and 1 large egg. The directions include preheating the oven to 350°F, creaming the butter and sugar, adding the molasses and vanilla, and then adding the flour and pecans.

10 Artbeads.com Looks to SLI Systems' Full-Service Site Search to Add Social Media and User-Generated Content to Search Results. SLI-Systems.com, September 12, 2011.

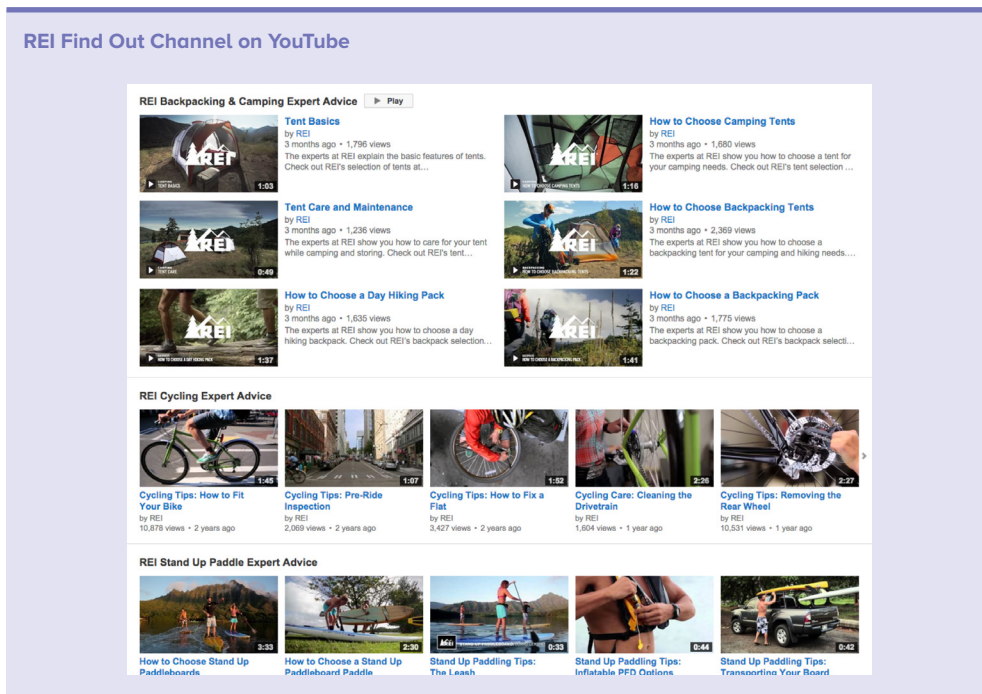
11 King Arthur Flour's Recipe for Rising Revenue. Site Search Today, December 18, 2013.

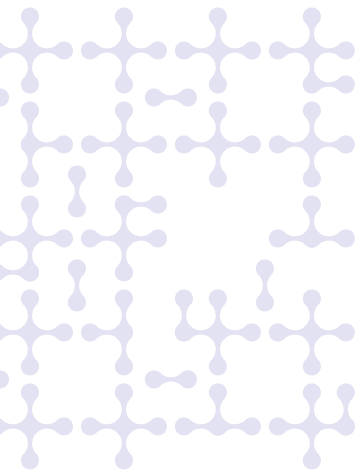
Use your FAQs

The Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page doesn't have to be dry and bland – it can be a great tool for content marketing. By answering customer questions in a creative way, the FAQ page can pull not just double duty, but triple duty. It will help you engage your customers, demonstrate your knowledge and show your brand's personality. It's a win-win-win!

➤ The questions your customers ask can also fuel ideas for other content – a new blog post or a helpful how-to video, for example.

The questions your customers ask can also fuel ideas for other content – a new blog post or a helpful how-to video, for example. Then, when people search for answers, they will find even more of your content to help them. REI is one retailer that makes great use of FAQs. The outdoor retailer fields actual questions from its customers and turns them into how-to and advice videos on its REI Find Out channel on YouTube. This effort positions the brand as an authority. When people look online for answers to questions about outdoor topics, like how to fix a bike flat, REI's content will pop up in their search.





Be the Media

If you want to be a top authority in your particular arena, it may be worth becoming your own media outlet. Many merchants will not have the resources to take this on, as it requires a great deal of content creation and curation. To get a feel for what this looks like, consider two of the top menswear blogs, GetKempt and GiltMANual. These blogs are run by e-retailers Urban Daddy and Gilt, respectively.¹² Both of these merchants sell men's clothes, but these blogs have become media outlets of their own. By creating separate sites featuring content that hasn't been overwhelmingly branded, these companies established themselves as authorities in their industry.

Becoming a publisher like Urban Daddy or Gilt will definitely separate your brand from the rest of the pack. By creating a resource of knowledge and expertise, you will inspire trust among your audience. On top of that, your new media outlet can drive tons of traffic to your e-commerce site.

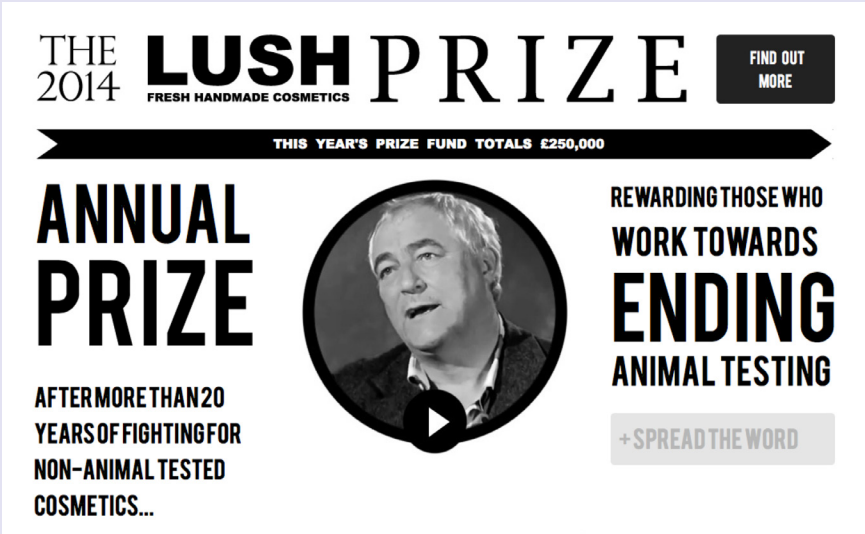
Take a Stand

Are there important issues and challenges within your industry? Take a stand! It's impressive when a company doesn't shy away from controversy, and gets behind a cause it believes in. Making a stand often builds trust, creates respect for your brand and shows that you are more than your products. It shows that you care about the issues. This can build some serious brand loyalty.

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Lush Cosmetics is a great example. This brand has taken a hard line against animal testing, and visitors to its site will find tons of content about how its products are cruelty free. In fact, Lush even has another site, fightanimaltesting.com, that is devoted entirely to this cause. Users won't find any Lush products on this site, but try searching "fight animal testing" on Google, and this is likely to be the first site you'll find. If shoppers dedicated to this cause land on this site, they are pretty likely to support and buy from Lush.

Lush Cosmetics' fightanimaltesting.com



¹² 5 Ways Ecommerce Sites Are Killing It with Content Marketing, by Emma Slemasko. Shopify blog, November 6, 2013.

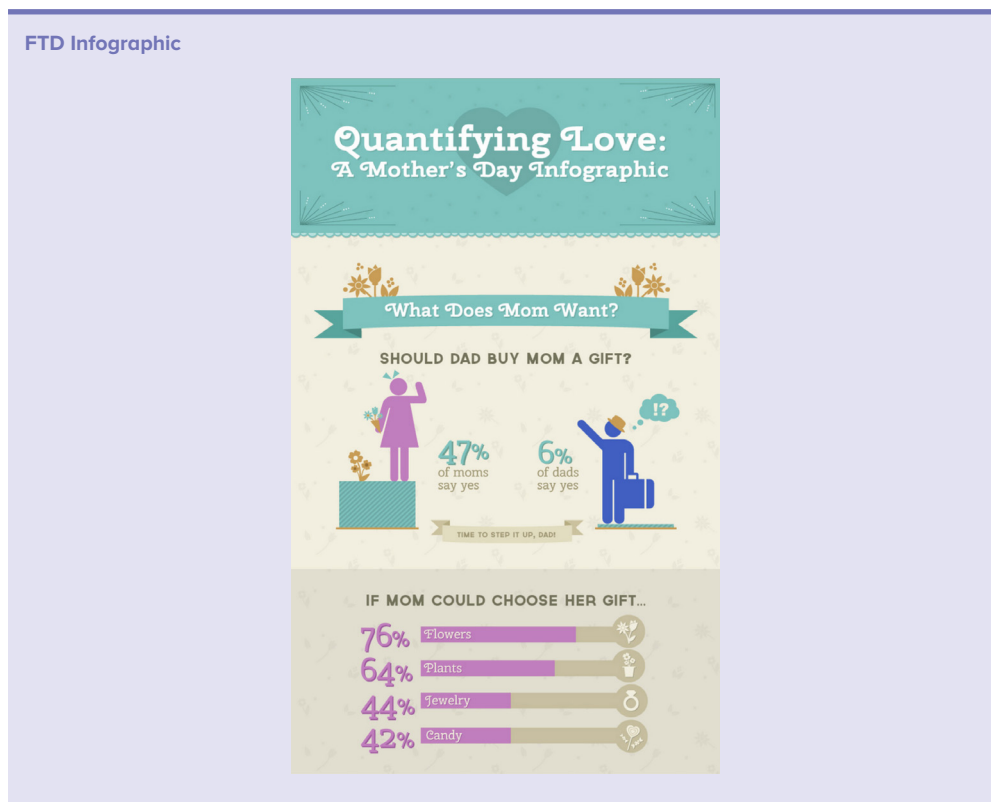
Get Graphic

Find a designer to create infographics about a topic that relates to your products or industry. Infographics are great for several reasons. They combine visual appeal with condensed information – perfect for grabbing people’s attention and giving them content quickly. Also, infographics are nice for the skimmers out there – those of us who are short on time (or attention span). Infographics are perfectly packaged for sharing. Whether on social media or industry blogs, infographics are just the kind of content thought leaders love to re-post.

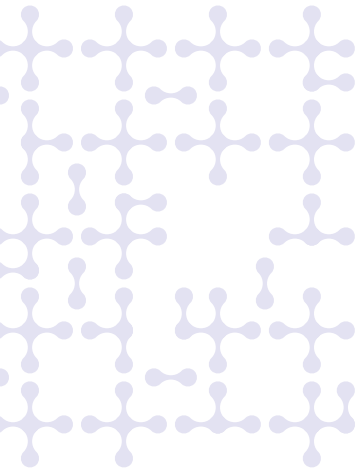
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Infographics can come in a few different flavors. Many are heavy on data, showing stats to an audience in an easily digestible, visual way. If you already have collected data that you can use, perfect! Create an infographic to share the insights you have gained. If not, simply think of topics you might use for an article or blog post that you can present visually instead. “How (and What) to Pack for a Weeklong Backpacking Trip” could be an infographic that’s perfect for an outdoor retailer to show its expertise, while “The Life of a Coffee Bean, from the Farm to your Pot” would be a cool visual for a coffee merchant to showcase its process.

A perfect example of how an infographic can generate sales comes from online flower retailer FTD. This brand created an infographic using interesting statistics about Mother’s Day, and showcased it in a nice visual article. One section shows that 76% of moms polled would choose flowers as their gift.¹³ What a great incentive to buy that Mother’s Day bouquet!



13 Quantifying Love: A Mother's Day Infographic. FTD.com.



Next Steps

So, where do you go from here? This paper presented many ideas, but of course not all of them will be right for your brand. What you do depends on your customers' needs and your company's abilities. Small steps are a good way to begin, so think about how you can leverage what you already have. Maybe your VP is an avid blogger. Use those posts for your brand! Or perhaps you already create video content on a regular basis but only upload it to YouTube. Incorporate those videos into the website, especially into the site search! Start small, expand as resources allow, and watch as that creative content increases sales for your business.

Also remember to reach out to vendors to extend the possibilities of what can be done with your own resources. When you have a vendor you can trust to help scale your content program quickly, it often makes sense to outsource. In the case of improving site search and incorporating content, SLI Systems focuses on making it fast, easy and effective for e-commerce customers to see results. SLI Systems is the industry's leading SaaS-based provider, with implementations on many of the e-commerce sites mentioned in this paper.

Whether you start small or use a vendor to quickly scale, creative content is one of the most valuable tools you can use to communicate your brand, engage your customers and convince shoppers to buy. When retailers combine interesting articles and videos with standout site search, the result is inevitably higher conversion rates and increased order values. With such a positive return on investment and impact on sales, the time to focus on creative content is now.

1. Consider which content your customers want most
 2. Repurpose content you already have
 3. Use a vendor to scale your content program quickly
-

About SLI Systems

SLI Systems enables the world's leading e-commerce retailers to increase sales by connecting shoppers with the products they're most likely to buy. With proven search technology that learns from the activity of real site visitors, SLI delivers SaaS-based site search, navigation, merchandising, mobile, recommendations and SEO solutions that arm retailers with the tools they need for rapid growth.

To learn more visit sli-systems.com,
sli-systems.co.uk, sli-systems.com.au



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