



Outsourcing Content Creation

5 Essential Questions For Managing The Relationship



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Introduction

You've decided to outsource your content – it's a great way to leverage the power of content marketing without draining your team, budget or time.

But your work's not quite done. Now it's time to think about how you'll manage that relationship.

Inefficient content production results in an estimated **\$958 million in wasted content marketing spending each year by midsize-to-large B2B firms in the U.S.**

[Gleanster/Kapost](#)



Ensuring Efficient Management

And it's critical that you think about it right away. A recent survey by Gleanster and Kapost found that more than 90% of B2B companies consider content creation management to be their greatest struggle. An outside content provider can help, but only if you're prepared to manage your relationship for best results.

It's essential that you know not only who will create your content, but how it will be done and what role you'll play in managing the process.

Building a Productive Relationship

Before signing any contracts, make sure to discuss these five must-ask questions to ensure you're prepared to manage the relationship between your company and your content creators. By doing so, you can avoid hassle down the road and ensure your investment is a productive one.





Question #1

What Kind of Contract Will You Have?



What are the terms?

The terms of your content agreement are as important as the methods your provider will use to create the content. Content is sold in a variety of ways, including:

- By the word
- Piece by piece
- Subscription packages



Understand Your Needs

What's Included?

Think about the scope of your needs and the development of your content strategy. It's critical to know exactly what the agreed-upon price will cover, so you know what to expect and when to expect it.

Ask questions about extras and add-ons as well. Are you paying for a specific volume of work? Will you be charged for added length? What's the cost for rush orders and revisions? This should all be clear before any agreement is reached.



Understanding Payment Structures

If you're using an outside content creator to supplement an in-house team, a per-piece or per-word payment structure can suit your needs. This can be great for short-term or smaller projects as well.

When your content partner will create the majority of your content, a subscription plan makes more sense. This ensures a specific volume of pieces each week, month or year to help you plan your content initiatives, from launching a blog to creating holiday campaigns.

Subscription plans also eliminate gaps in content. Consistency must be your number one priority in content marketing, and subscription plans make sure you won't fall behind or miss important dates. Plus, with no need to play catch up or rush, you're less likely to introduce damaging errors.





Question #2

How Quickly Will You Receive Your Content?



Turnaround Time

With so many services available on demand, we all expect fast turnaround times on each product we purchase. Yet an investment in content is twofold – you must invest time and money to achieve a great product.

For example, 38% of marketers spend 1-2 hours on each blog post, while another 29% spend 2-3 hours, but only 8% devote less than an hour per post ([HubSpot](#)). Given those numbers, you can quickly see how the hours stack up.

38% of marketers spend 1 – 2 hours on each blog post they create, but only 8% spend less than 1 hour.

[HubSpot](#)



Deadlines Matter

You need a content creator who can meet your deadlines and deliver quality content on a timetable that works for you. Delivery dates should be clear and established right away, with no areas of uncertainty.

If your agency can't provide firm dates, that suggests you may come away empty handed when it's time to publish your content. It's also a good sign that they lack the experience needed to accurately assess the scope of your project and understand the time and staff needed to finish your work on time.

Too Good to Be True?

Be wary of any company that promises extremely large volumes of high-quality work in no time at all. This suggests quality takes second place to speed, leaving you with content you can't use or need to perform extensive in-house revisions on.





Question #3

**How Much Time Will You Spend
Managing Their Work?**



In-House vs. Outsource

There's a good reason companies outsource content creation – it's a time-consuming process when done right.

Choosing the right content provider frees up your time, allowing you to focus on other essential aspects of your business.

However, make the wrong choice, and you'll find yourself wasting more time than you save.

61% of the most effective B2B content marketers meet daily or weekly **to manage content strategy.**

[Content Marketing
Institute](#)



Get It Right The First Time

You need to set clear expectations about where your input and oversight are required, as well as know to what extent you can put your program fully in the hands of your content creators. After that, you shouldn't need to give content a second thought until it's ready to go live.

It's important to maintain open communication, but overseeing every aspect of content creation yourself, from ideas to quality control, means you're not really getting the full benefit of hiring a team of writers. Worse yet, you're missing out on the biggest benefit of hiring an outside expert: their expertise.

The bottom line? Your content partner must have the know-how to take your strategy from the idea phase through execution with minimal oversight.



Keep In Touch

That's not to say you should never communicate with your content agency. Communication is vital to any relationship, and it's the only way to achieve great results.

In the end, your content firm should always be open to discussions about strategy and changing needs, but ultimately able to hit the mark without constant check-ins, revisions and general direction from you or anyone on your team.





Question #4

What Will Communication Be Like?



Building a Great Relationship

It's important that your content marketing firm can work independently. It's even more important that they can work with you.

You want providers with whom you can be relatively hands off, but that doesn't mean communication doesn't matter. Far from it – when your partner really gets your goals and fully communicates their plans, you'll achieve the best results. That's why it's important to build a real relationship that makes you certain your content providers understand your company.



It's Not Just Collecting Content

Content marketing isn't just acquiring various pieces of content. Strategy is essential, and to make the most of it you'll need a partner who knows yours and is ready to discuss and build it with you.

Plus, revisions will likely be necessary at the beginning of your relationship. When lines of communication are strong, you won't just get the corrections you want, but also a good opportunity to ensure your partner knows your brand and can strengthen content marketing efforts in the future.



The Customer Is Always Right

Communication also demonstrates the level of customer service you're likely to receive. If your requests go unanswered for days or it's impossible to get someone on the phone in an emergency, it's difficult to imagine that higher-level requests and conversations will go well either.

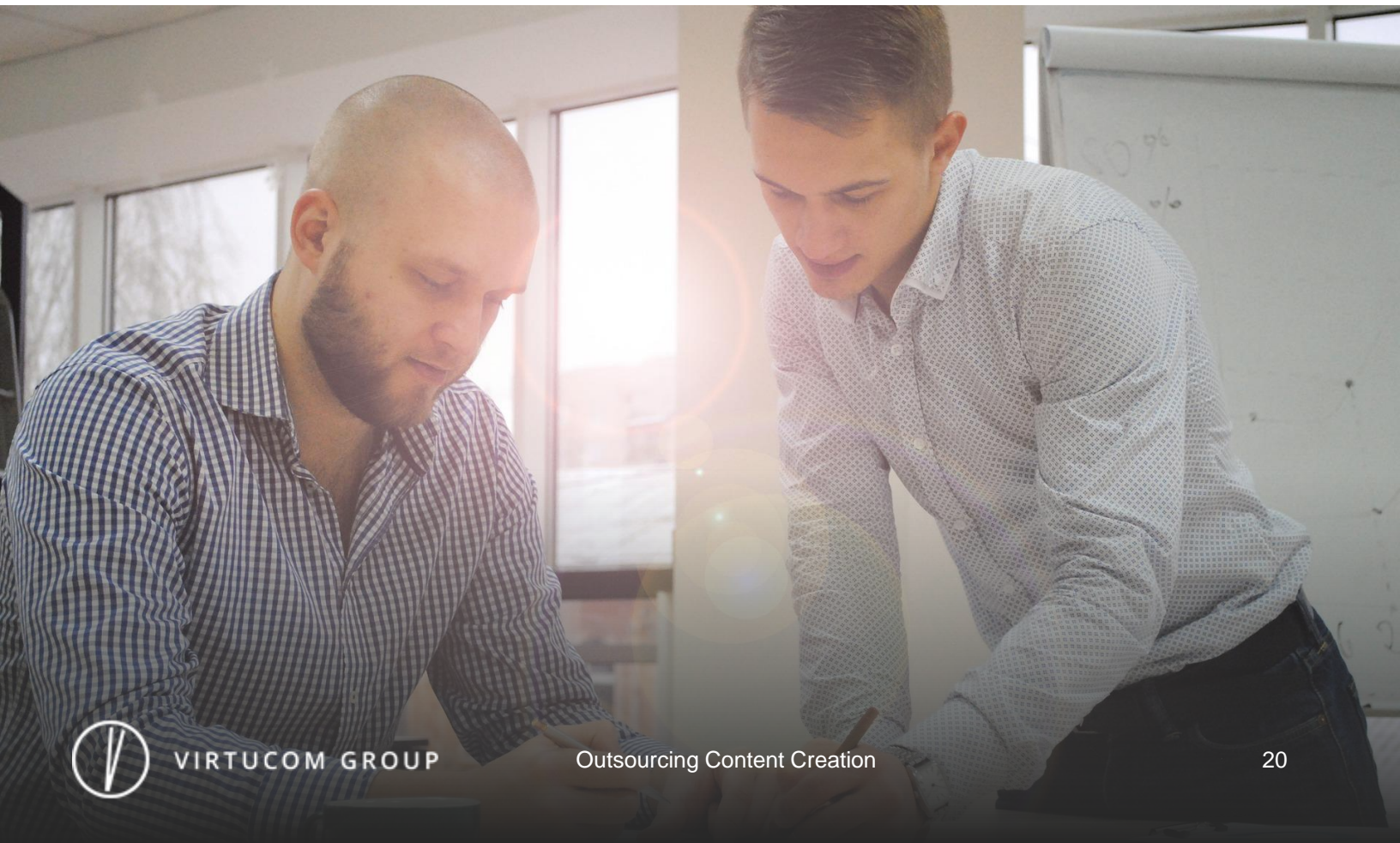
In short, your content is the face of your business. That's why it's essential that you can count on your content provider to be responsive to everything from simple questions to shifts in your program's goals.





Question #5

How Will Success Be Measured?



Results Matter

That's why you must develop clear guidelines for assessing the return on your content investment.

If that sounds obvious, think again: 50% of B2B marketing executives cite difficulty in attributing marketing activity directly to revenue ([Forrester](#)), making it more difficult to justify a marketing budget. Yet 93% of chief marketing officers (CMOs) are experiencing increased pressure to demonstrate the ROI of content marketing initiatives ([AdAge](#)).

50% of B2B marketing executives find it difficult to attribute **marketing activity directly to value**.

[Forrester](#)



Know Your KPIs

There are a number of key performance indicators (KPIs) to keep in mind as you evaluate the success of your content. It's also important to keep in mind that these can shift based on your ultimate goals. Consider the following common KPIs:

- Unique page views
- Return visitors
- Social sharing and likes
- Number of followers, subscribers and comments
- Backlinks from reputable sources
- Time spent on each page
- Average position of unbranded keywords
- Percentage of organic users on website
- Percentage of organic traffic that converts
- New leads by program and asset
- Marketing qualified leads by program and asset
- Pipeline touched and generated
- Revenue influenced



Lead generation and conversion should also be at the forefront of your KPIs. Your content should include inbound links directing visitors to offers and product landing pages, and it should encourage them to explore your site as well.

The Proof Is In The Numbers

If you've entered into an extended contract, it makes sense to calculate your annual contract value to truly understand your content's ROI. Simply divide your weekly, monthly, quarterly or annual cost by pieces of content and the number of leads generated or converted during that period by each. This will make budgeting and understanding your ROI all the more simple.

Your provider should also have ideas about important KPIs and how to evolve your strategy over time. If they're unable or unwilling to do so, this should raise concerns about the partnership.



Conclusion

Are you prepared to work with a content partner?

Ideally, you'll find your partnership with a content creator simplifies marketing, saving time, resources and money. However, you'll need to invest time and energy in setting up your partnership to get real value in return.

Be sure to ask these questions before entering into an agreement. It's to your benefit, and your content partner's, to mutually agree on expectations and outcomes from the beginning. Their response will tell you a great deal about the service you'll receive.

Ultimately, your goal should be to maintain a real dialogue. This will ensure you receive quality content and build a relationship that will serve your business for years to come.



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