



THE BRAND PUBLISHING ROADMAP

A 7-Step Guide to Creating a Content
Marketing Program That Delivers

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Table of Contents

Page	Section
3	Where Should We Start?
5	Step 1: Building The Case For Content
10	Step 2: Planning & Allocating Resources
14	Step 3: Defining The Audience
20	Step 4: Articulating The Brand's Story
23	Step 5: Executing A Production Plan
32	Step 6: Optimizing & Adapting Regularly
37	Step 7: Give Your Powerful Content A Powerful Platform

Where Should We Start?

You know the term “content marketing.” Nearly every marketer has gotten in on the action in some shape or form.

You may not be familiar with the term “brand publisher.” If it sounds like “content marketing,” that’s because it is.

However, you need to understand the distinction...

Brand publishers are the companies that make content marketing pay.

Only a small minority can truly claim to be brand publishers.

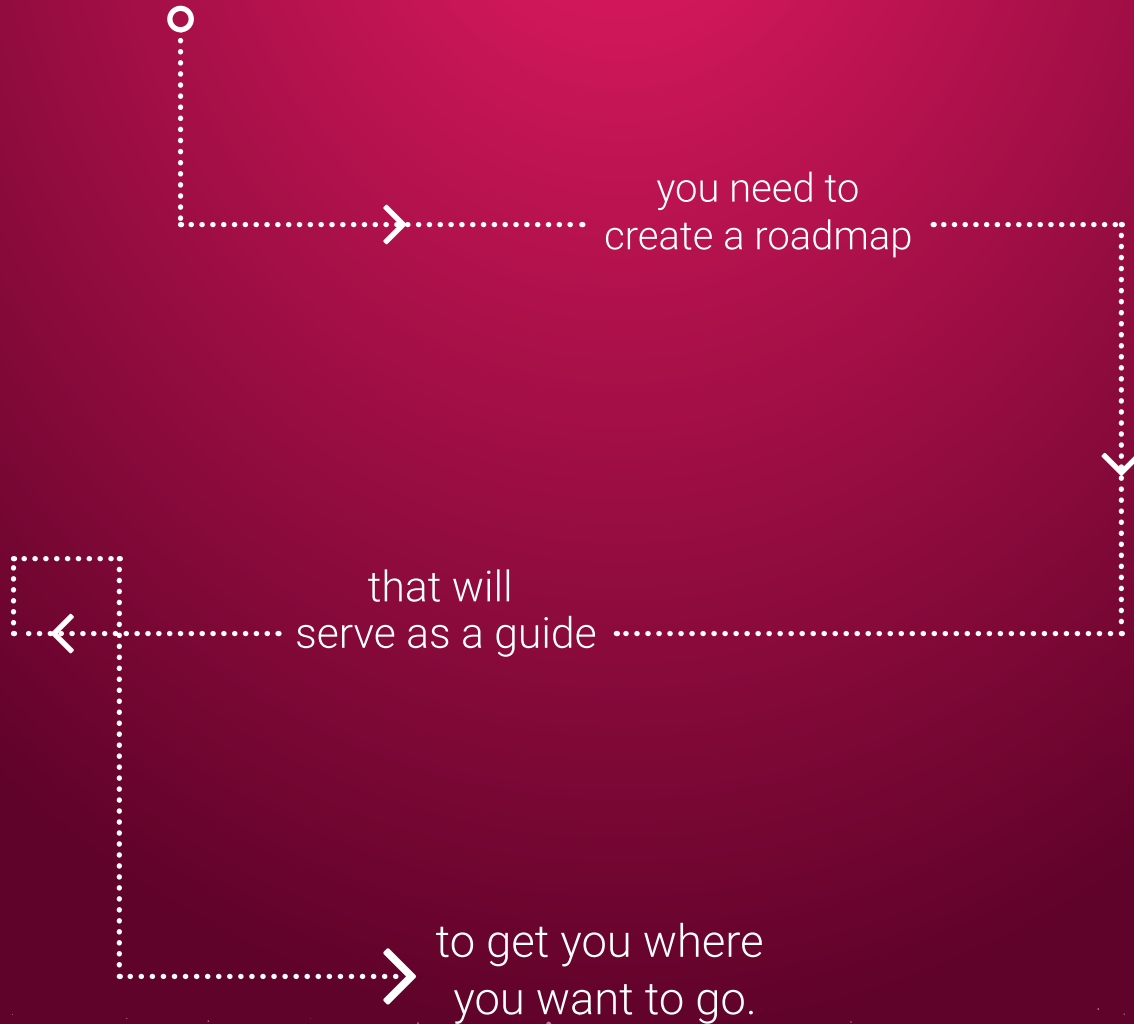
How do they do it?

- Embrace the idea that they are a media company and adopt an organizational governance around the principles of journalism
- Rely on owned media channels to serve as the epicenter of all marketing communications
- Make an uncompromising commitment to consistently creating, publishing and promoting useful, entertaining and inspiring content to draw potential buyers closer to their brand
- Organize their operation to produce quality media at scale
- Commit to using data to inform all strategic decisions

These companies –brand publishers– don’t just pump-out content; they map-out a plan and adhere to a methodology designed to deliver efficiency and efficacy.

We’ve chosen to call this plan **The Brand Publishing Roadmap.**

If you want to get in (and stay in)
the content marketing game,



**Here's how
it's done.**

Step 1

Building the Case for Content

Whether you're driving a car or a marketing department, the purpose for having a roadmap is to get to your destination in good time—without getting lost.

The key here is “your destination.” Where is it?

“According to CMI’s 2017 B2B Research Report, 49% of content marketers blame lack of strategy for their stagnating content programs.”

Purpose First

Your content marketing journey is going to be long and require hard work. What's the purpose of going on this journey?

Begin your plan by documenting the answer. It need not be complicated.

You Probably Want To:

- Reduce advertising expenditures
- Increase brand awareness
- Position your company as a leader in its field
- Attract prospects and convert them to buyers and brand advocates

Though these aren't the only reasons for embarking on a content marketing journey, they're all good reasons. So justify them to yourself, your team, and the company's executives by writing the purpose down for all to see.

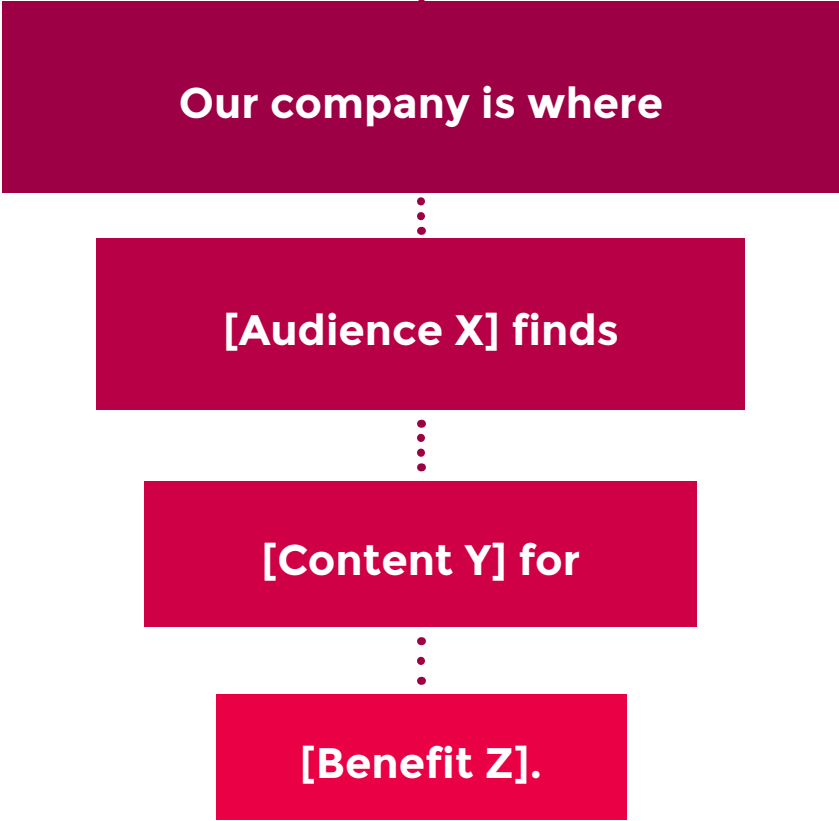
State Your Mission

Your roadmap calls for a mission statement as well—a specific vision of who, what and why.

Content marketing master Andy Crestodina makes it easy to understand. Andy writes:



Documenting your mission statement is surprisingly simple, but most content marketers haven't done it. To make it easy, fill in the blanks...



Study the Competition

The companies you compete with are publishing content too. It's likely they attend content marketing conferences, read books and blogs about the field, and work with consultants. If they want to create an effective **Brand Publishing Roadmap**, they may even read this ebook.

In other words, they have access to the same wisdom you do. You'll be wise to closely evaluate the niche you'll compete in.

The goal is to find a space to dominate, a point of differentiation.

Ask Yourself:

- What are competitors doing well?
- What are they missing?
- What's not being articulated?
- How can you win an audience?

Establish **SMART** Goals

On the road, you pay attention to time, mileage, costs, etc.—things you can measure. You'll do the same with your *Brand Publishing Roadmap*.

You stated the purpose of your brand publishing and documented the mission. Next, you'll create a list of SMART objectives. SMART is an acronym meaning:

S

[Specific]

M

[Measurable]

A

[Achievable]

R

[Relevant]

T

[Time-oriented]

What should the content aid in accomplishing for your business? The list can be long. Will a measure of success be website traffic? Subscribers? Demos? Purchases?

A SMART goal is *not* vague:

Generate more leads.

A SMART goal *includes* all of the above:

Generate 50 organic B2B leads per month, within six months.

Use the SMART acronym formula to create a detailed list of objectives.

Tracking Progress

All roads lead to numbers. Remember, M is for “measurable.” The objectives I mentioned above are quantifiable. With analytics applications, you’ll be able to track the degree to which you are achieving them.

These are commonly called KPIs, or “Key Performance Indicators.” One of the first pages of your *Brand Publishing Roadmap* should include a list of KPIs that map to your objectives. You’ll check them often and steer accordingly.

As you hit the road, you'll determine who'll drive, who'll navigate, where the gas money's coming from, etc. Again, the metaphor is meaningful for planning your publishing efforts.

You need a team and a budget.

Tooling Your Team

The ideal brand publishing team has a robust roster of specialists likely to include one or more:

Ideal Brand Publishing Team

- Strategist/leader
- Designer
- Writer
- Analytical Expert
- Social Media Manager
- Media Producer
for video and/or podcasts
- Managing Editor
- Software Guru

Whoa! Hire one of each at an average annual salary of say \$60K and your budget immediately comes close to a half-million ($8 \times \$60,000 = \$480,000$).

While this level of talent expenditure may not faze an established, well-funded marketing department, it's unlikely to fly with most companies aiming to embark on a brand publishing journey.

What can you do?

Hire Hybrids



“Gone are the days when companies are hiring someone who can do one job and one job only. In most organizations, hybrid professionals exist who have skills in multiple areas. The related skills for each primary skill area can help you think about individuals who can play multiple roles.”

Michele Linn, *Content Marketing Institute*

Essentially, your first hire (or first few hires) needs to wear multiple hats. While it may be difficult to find a jack-of-all-trades, in the age of the digital native, an increasing abundance of people do indeed possess versatile skills.

Consider, for example, a skilled journalist capable of writing, editing, optimizing (SEO) and analyzing many forms of content and social media. It's possible the same individual learns basic skills to create useful images (design) and create blog posts (software) and social media updates.

Hire Outside Content Providers



“Most content marketing leaders are looking to reduce their expensive content agency fees. People are getting charged for a reputation, rather than for quality on the page. They find PowerPost because they’re looking for an agency alternative.”

Dan Curran, *PowerPost*

The immense demand for content has sparked a huge expansion of agency and freelance options.

Small Marketing Teams Might Choose to Outsource Work to Content Providers Specializing In:

- Planning
- Writing
- Media Production
- Search Engine Optimization
- Pay-per-click and digital advertising
- Digital PR
- Influencer Marketing
- Content Distribution and Promotion

Bring Aboard Talent *and* Outside Providers

A common and practical approach for tooling your brand publishing team is doing both insourcing and outsourcing. There is no single “right way” to build your team. You’ll need to hire talent and/or vendor based on the skills you need first or most.

The idea here is to apply the lessons above to assemble a team with the necessary collection of skills and balance your needs with a realistic budget.

Also, it should not go unmentioned that a very large talent pool can come courtesy of freelancers. Hiring individual talents to write for your blog or produce video, for example, may give you more flexibility to experiment and help avoid the waste suffered from bad hires.

You’ll Need More Than Talent

This step in the making of your Brand Publishing Roadmap is about identifying the resources you’ll need and budgeting accordingly. In most cases (and unlike the advertising-intensive marketing programs of the 20th century), human resources will represent your highest cost center.

A More Complete Pass At Budget Allocation Might Also Include:

- Advertising / Media Costs
PPC, Social, Native, Display, Retargeting
- Software Tools / SaaS Platforms
CRM, Marketing, Automation, Email, Social Media Management, Project Management, Analytics
- Specialized Vendors / Partners
Market Research, Website Development, PR
- Training and Learning
PPC, Social, Native, Display, Retargeting

Defining the Audience

Marketing pundits often stress the common denominator of failed content marketing programs is they're not based on a solid, documented plan.

Your **Brand Publishing Roadmap** is a plan. However, documenting a mission statement and allocating your resources isn't the end-all, be-all of your plan. You can't stop there (though many do).

Making your roadmap solid must involve the process of personifying your buyers. You probably have more than one type of buyer, so you'll need more than one customer persona.



“Buyer personas provide the meaty insights you need to build the story meaningful enough to motivate them to take action. A buyer persona should help you develop a narrative that reveals the story you need to share.”

Ardath Albee, *Marketing Interactions*

Simply stated, a buyer persona helps you and everyone on your brand publishing team answer and agree on:

Buyer Persona

- Who will we talk to?
- Why will they care?
- What will we say that's relevant to them?

Personas: Create a Very Real but Fictional Character

When you're done creating a persona, you'll have a biographical sketch of a fictional person, your ideal buyer. To refer to them in the future, it's a good practice to give the person a name (e.g. Denise Designer, Steve Startup).

Though your persona is fictional, he or she is defined by very real qualities—characterized by demographics and psychographics, actual pain points and behaviors. Essentially, your goal is to create a composite sketch of a target market based on commonalities, which you can validate.

Ardath Albee, a well-established expert on the subject of personas recommends you create a persona with depth by including:

- **Objectives**
What specifically is he trying to accomplish?
- **Orientation**
Where is the person in his career?
- **Questions**
What are the burning questions he'll ask?
- **Problems**
What specifically does she consider to be the problem?
- **Obstacles**
What factors might prevent her from buying?
- **Media Preferences**
Where does she gather information?
- **Keywords**
What phrases might he type into a search engine?
- **Engagement Scenarios**
Visualize how your persona might interact with your content over time.
- **Day in the Life**
Bring it all to life. Document what this person would do and say during a typical day.

Buyers Journey: What's Your Buyer Thinking?



“The new objective for marketing will be to evolve customers, from unaware all the way to a brand-subscribing advocate. And content-driven experiences will be the natural-selection process that moves the customer along.”

“We are seeing brands have much more success when there is a process for creating consistent and integrated experiences. And the key is that these experiences are solely designed with the purpose to create delight at every single stage of the customer journey.”

Robert Rose, *The Content Advisory*

(The education and consulting group with the Content Marketing Institute)

Here, in the personification stage, is where a traditional publisher and brand publisher part ways.

The traditional publisher has subscribers they serve and advertisers that help pay the bills. Their goal is to keep them.

In the brand publishing world, a marketing agenda must be considered. Where is the potential buyer or customer in his or her journey?

Definitions of the buyer's journey differ slightly, however, they all refer to the progress an individual makes towards a purchase decision.

As you know, it's often viewed as a funnel in the eyes of marketing and sales teams and simplified into a minimum of three stages:

AWARENESS

At the top of the funnel, the prospect is researching potential solutions.



CONSIDERATION

At the middle of the funnel, the prospect is comparing potential solutions.



DECISION

At the bottom of the funnel, the prospect is making a choice.

And here's the reason it's crucial to closely evaluate the buyer journey in this way: marketing and sales strategists must come together to create and publish content that meets the needs of the buyer from top to bottom. A common mistake made by less mature brand publishers is to focus only on the top of funnel.

CONTENT MARKETING ROADMAP

The B2B Buyer's Journey



Note the awareness, consideration and decision stages represent a funnel, however, the most effective marketers envision an inverted funnel continuing below resulting in a new analogy: an hourglass. Stages that follow a purchase include retention and advocacy, which widens the population size again.

In other words, your customers become factors in your referral sales. Brand publishers plan and create content to increase the customer satisfaction that fosters word-of-mouth and fuels customer advocacy.

Bring It All Together

A highly useful element in the audience-defining section of your Brand Publishing Roadmap is a complete matrix that plots personas along one axis and journey phases on the other.

You'll Create A Table That Includes

- Each stage
- For each persona
- With content to satisfy their needs all across and top-to-bottom

What you'll ultimately have is a remarkably useful (and demanding) to-do list.

Step 4

Articulating the Brand's Story

Things can get borderline abstract when you arrive at this stretch of your *Brand Publishing Roadmap* because we're talking about storytelling. But you'll want to stay on-point and the tips you'll find here should help you succeed.

How Would I Write For This Brand?

The exercise here is to create a great answer to the question above. It's that simple.

The Answers Should Be:

- Based on the history, current state, and aspirations of the company
- True and authentic
- Agreed upon by everyone on the team
- Adhered to every day, in every way, in all that you publish



“Brand stories can be told in many different forms, with an evolving story line and cast of characters, but content creators must be vigilant about continuity and consistency, avoiding any holes. Your brand's story has to resonate with people at a level that goes way beyond what's tangible—the functionality, features, and benefits of your products or services—to create a deep, emotional connection with your audience.”

Debbie Williams, *Sprout Content*

Core Messaging

Gartner lists “storylines” as one of the **Six Elements of Results-Driven Content Marketing Strategy**. They explain it’s important to consistently execute in line with corporate narratives. Come up with answers to the following questions to articulate your storylines:

-  **What is the brand identity?**
-  **What key messages must you convey?**
-  **Where does the brand intend to become part of the market dialogue?**
-  **How can it define a unique point of view?**
-  **Where must it be consistent and where can it diverge?**

Brand Standards



“Businesses often spend a lot of time on their logo and color palette and other things they think of as ‘branding’—the look and feel of their website, collateral, signage, fonts, and so on. But very few take the time to consider the branding that a unique voice can give a company.

A key question is this:

Mask the logo on your site. Do you sound different, unique—like yourself? Or do you sound like everyone else?”

Ann Handley, MarketingProfs

Established brands create corporate style guides to guide contributors and help enforce compliance and consistency. Your **Brand Publishing Roadmap** should include the essentials:

Your Brand Publishing Roadmap Should Include the Essentials:

- **Look and Feel**
Graphic design considerations such as logo usage, fonts, colors, and layout.
- **Voice and Tone**
How should the brand voice be articulated?
- **Style**
What’s in- and out-of-bounds? For example, a brand may choose to have a strong, aggressive point of view (think Apple, Dollar Shave Club) or maintain a conservative stance (most companies).

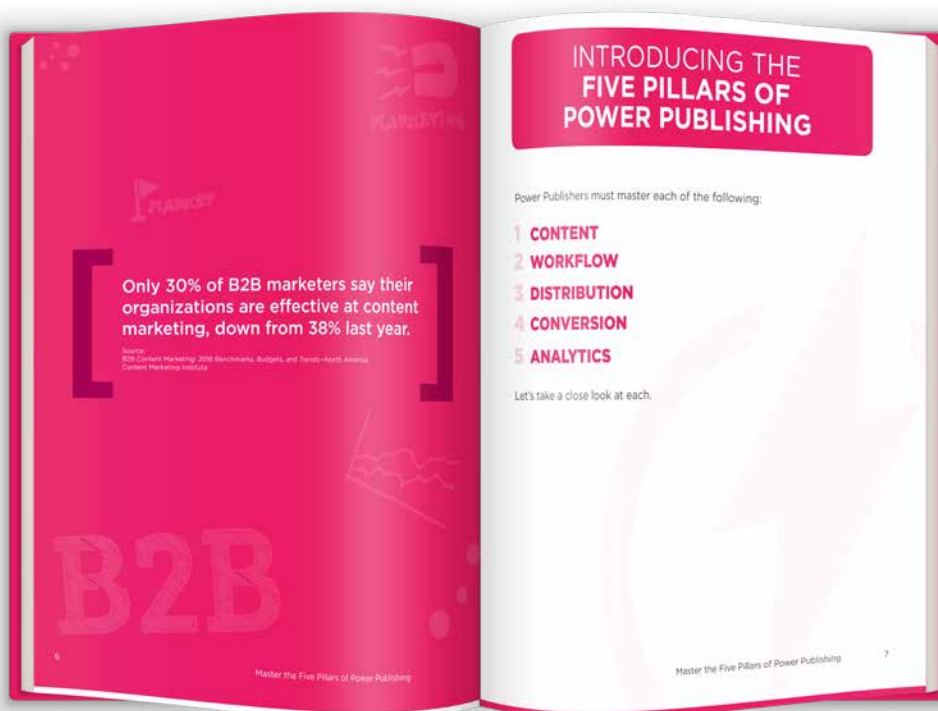


“Thoughtful content marketers experiment with different content formats in an effort to determine which resonate with their audience (or audiences). With some patience and persistence, marketers stand to increase their reach and resonance by spreading their wings across a wider mix of media.”

Jay Baer, *Convince and Convert*

You may be familiar with the [PowerPost ebook Master the Five Pillars of Power Publishing](#). The first three pillars examined in the book are **1** content creation, **2** workflow, and **3** distribution.

Like a lot of the subjects discussed in this ebook, each of the pillars is vital and deep. We'll be concise here, but dig into the most important components of executing a production plan.



Content Production Structure

Let's key-in on atomization. an important tactic for increasing the reach and ROI of your content creation efforts.

WHAT DOES “ATOMIZATION” MEAN?



“Taking a strong content marketing platform or theme, and executing it in many, strategically sound ways.”

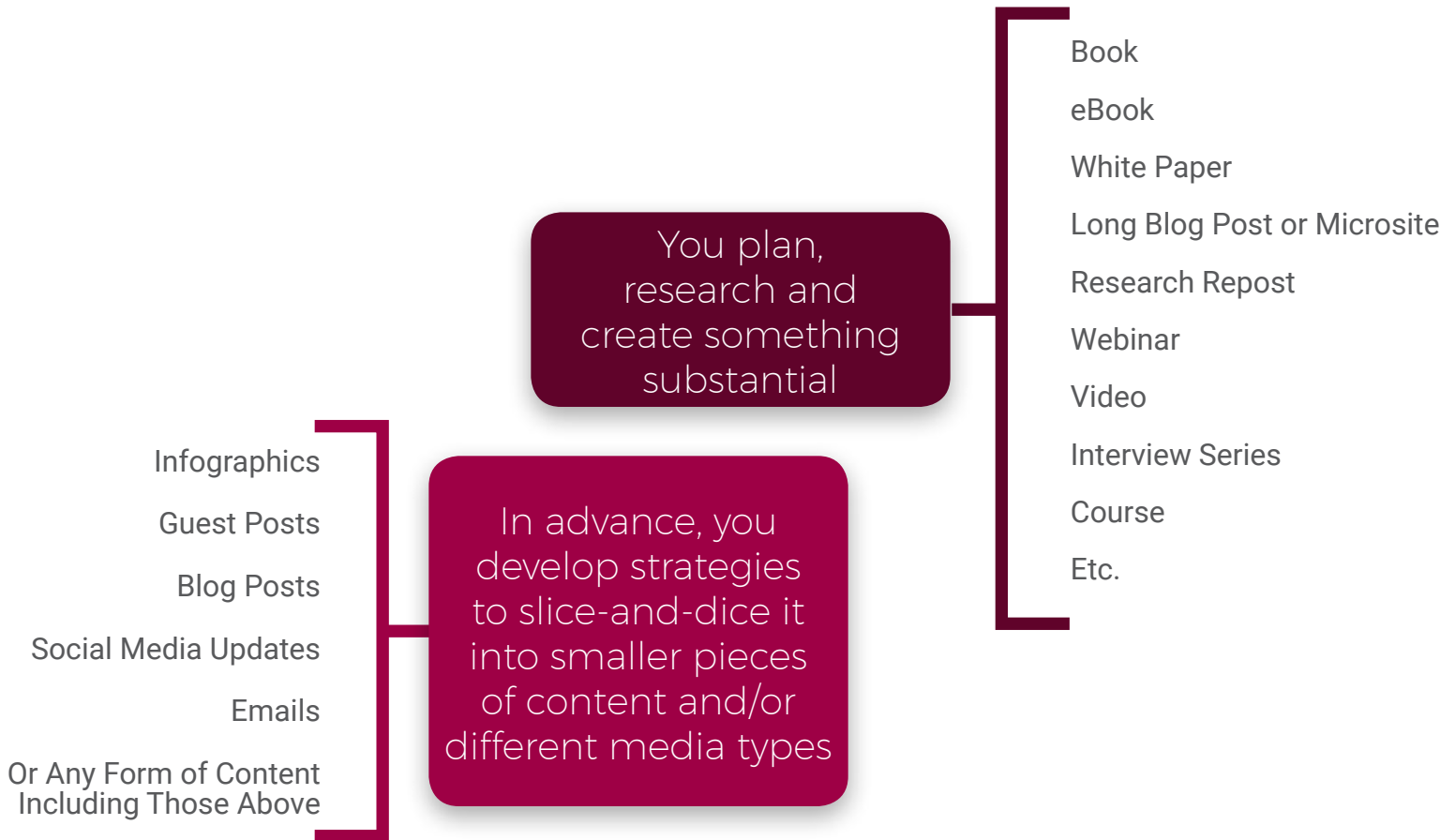
Todd Defren, *SHIFT Communications*

The process of atomizing content has been expressed in marketing publications in a variety of ways, most notably, as repurposing. What is it that you repurpose?

That Too Has Been Described with Different Metaphors Including:

- Big Rock Content (or big content)
- Divisible Content
- Content Pillars
- Cornerstone Content

They mean the same thing.

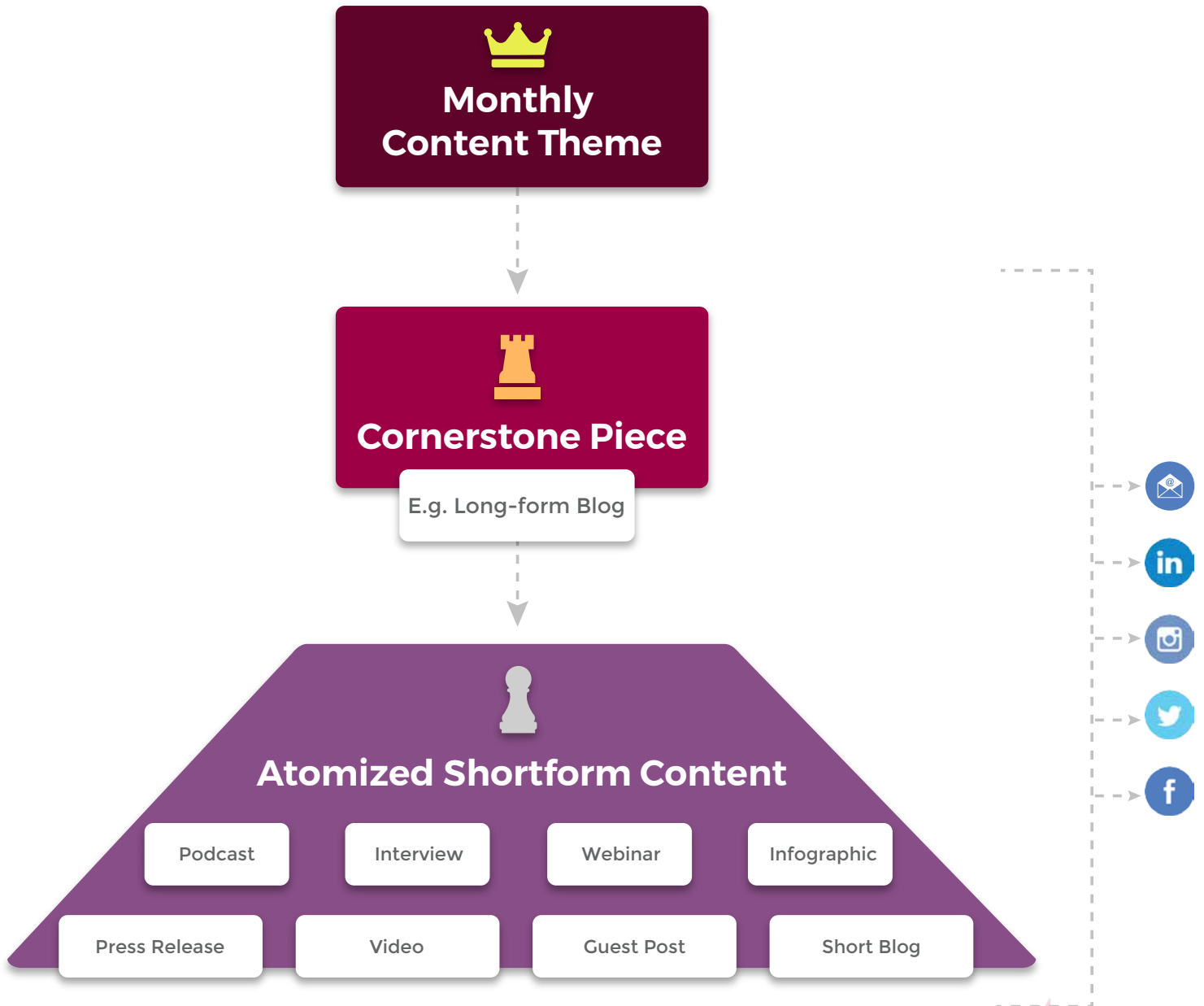


You then publish the content with a **campaign mentality** by creating citations and links to where the “big content” is housed on your website. In most cases, you’ll gate the content for the purpose of collecting leads.

PowerPost uses a “Theme/Module” approach for its own content program to ensure the atomization process is planned at the outset.

In the planning stages, we’d break-out themes from a larger piece of content like an eBook or white paper. For example, the “Building the Case for Content” chapter in this eBook could be used as a guiding theme for a month’s worth of content. We’d then assign little groupings of content (“modules”) every week, consisting of one long cornerstone article and several shorter pieces (blog posts, infographics, etc.), all on the same subject.

The PowerPost Production / Atomization Process



Data-driven Content Planning



“We can validate demand for content by establishing whether or not content based around a similar topic or theme has performed well before.”

Sujan Patel, *Web Profits*

We use the term “discovery intelligence” to describe the use of content and social media tools that reveal analytics about specific websites, keywords, topics, authors, etc. The Buzzsumo service is one such example of a discovery intelligence tool. Keyword research tools—free and paid—are useful as well.

The idea is simple enough: you employ digital tools to discover content that has gained traction as measured by search volume, links, social shares, or other desirable engagement metrics.

Obviously executing a smart production plan calls for tapping into data where it exists and planning your editorial calendar, at least partially, based on proven successes.

Search Strategy

Given the dynamics of digital marketing today, the power of SEO is undeniable. Practicing content marketing effectively, in digital channels, relies on applying the principles of search effectively.

SEO

- **Assessing**
your current standing on search relative to your competition.
- **Defining**
a list of keyword phrases for which you'll aim to rank for
- **Ensuring**
best practices are employed for indicating topical relevance to Google and other search engines with on-page optimization practices
- **Building**
authority and addressing the prominent search engine ranking factors that contribute to your long-term success

Editorial Planning

Here's another big and important topic.



Answer these questions, and maybe more, in your *Brand Publishing Roadmap* and you'll save enormously as you ramp-up a professional-level publishing operation.

Collaboration

Earlier in the ebook, we drilled down on potential members of your brand publishing team, which might include agencies, vendors, freelancers, the various internal teammates mentioned, and maybe more—the CMO, or CCO, for instance.

How will you get it and keep it all together and on-schedule? How will you collaborate?

Does your answer include email, Slack, or content sharing services such as Google Drive and Dropbox? I'll tell you this: good for you for having some idea about tackling collaboration and scheduling; however, these general purpose tools will ultimately impede you from scaling the way you want.

A truly efficient *Brand Publishing Roadmap* will include a plan for employing a highly efficient collaboration platform—and not just a calendaring app.



“PowerPost has raised the bar for enterprise collaboration, and of course, we’ll be glad to show you how it will make your operation run like a machine and save many hours and thousands of dollars each month on your publishing journey.”

Dan Curran, *PowerPost*

Content Distribution and Promotion

Effective brand publishers spend as much, or more, time and money on content distribution and promotion as they do creation. Your **Brand Publishing Roadmap** will not be complete if it doesn't involve explicit ideas for incorporating and integrating a mix of:

OWNED MEDIA

Essentially your website, blog and email list(s). While you don't "own" social media channels, you could include social sharing strategies here.

PAID MEDIA

Any "pay-to-play" channel including Google AdWords, Facebook, native advertising, retargeting and more.

EARNED MEDIA

Available opportunities to deliver guest posts, get interviewed, earn shares, mentions, citations and backlinks.

SHARED MEDIA

The massive opportunity to use publicly available channels such as YouTube, Medium, Quora, Reddit, LinkedIn, Tumblr, Pinterest, Product Hunt, and much more—including industry specific websites and forums.

Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing is a hot and fast-expanding content promotion play.

Frequently Used Tactics Now Include:

- Celebrity Endorsements
- Micro-influencers in any niche, such as bloggers, power users of YouTube and Instagram, or anyone whose opinions sway an audience in any field or on a channel
- Mentions by, and content from, reputable industry leaders



“It’s still somewhat normal to see teams execute 50%, 60% and even 70% of their marketing activities without measuring results. We need to hold ourselves totally accountable for delivering results that businesses can value. And there’s a path to getting there.”

Michael Brenner, *Marketing Insider Group*

Effective brand publishing is data-driven. Therefore, your **Brand Publishing Roadmap** would be reckless and incomplete without including some form of analytics planning.

Selecting KPIs

The decision to invest in brand publishing comes with the expectation to see results such as traffic, leads, and sales. Key performance indicators (KPIs) help you understand the degree to which your brand publishing operation is achieving success. Regularly analyzing your KPIs is the key to perpetually improving performance.

No marketing guide can tell you exactly what performance indicators you should consider “key.” Your challenge in identifying useful KPIs should consider:

Marketing Activities and Channels

Consider where you’re focusing your resources and in which channels you can improve:

Search Engine Optimization
Social Media Marketing
Online Advertising

Onsite Conversion
Email Marketing

Journey Stages

Breaking KPIs down to stages of the buyer journey or sales funnel is an appropriate way to identify where your weaknesses lie.

Who the Reports Are For

Understand the reports you generate will serve different audiences. Adjust accordingly with selecting KPIs and deciding how they are to be presented. Keep in mind which people will need the data to make business decisions.

For example, executives will want to see easy-to-understand overviews, while managers and staffers will require deeper dives into the channels they use and value most.

Commonly Used Metrics

HubSpot points out the less you know about your key performance indicators, the less likely you are to meet your revenue goals. They conducted research to discover the seven most common metrics marketers use.

Ranking High to Low, They Are:

1. Traffic
2. Sales

3. Conversion
4. SEO Rank

5. Time On Site
6. Customer Feedback

7. Subscriber Growth

Categorizing Metrics

Another way to tackle the task is to break metrics down into categories. (You'll note some overlap with the list above).

Break Metrics Down Into Categories

- **Consumption**
traffic, referral traffic, page views, time-on-site, time-on-page, abandonment rates, downloads
- **Lead Generation**
form completion, lead origination channels, measurement by content type or specific piece of content, subscriptions
- **Social Sharing**
likes, retweets, upvotes, etc.
- **Retention**
new and returning visitors, bounce rate, social media follower counts, email unsubscribes
- **Sales**
Note: Sales metrics are generally achieved by integrating marketing analytics and automation platforms with CMS systems. *Yes, it's more complex.*

Gathering and Using Metrics



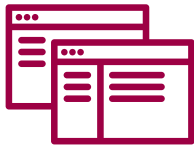
“There is an ocean of data in your analytics. And it’s fun to swim in the ocean. But it doesn’t really get you anywhere. If you’re just looking at reports, without answering questions, testing hypotheses or drawing conclusions, you’re not doing analysis.”

Andy Crestodina, *Orbit Media Studios*

Here are some additional tips for gathering and using metrics:



Evaluate the tools you have free access to such as Google Analytics and the insights provided by social media channels to determine if you should also invest in more comprehensive and additional analytics platforms.



Build a dashboard to track the key performance indicators most relevant to your objectives. Begin by tracking numbers you can measure easily. Over time, you'll call on additional tools and metrics to refine and expand your analytics capabilities.



Analyze your competition and industry at large to extract insights about the content that performs best.



Make sure your content analytics inform important decisions about resource allocation. For instance:

- What forms of content merit the most manpower?
- Which assets should we atomize and repurpose?
- Which assets should we support with additional promotions and advertising?



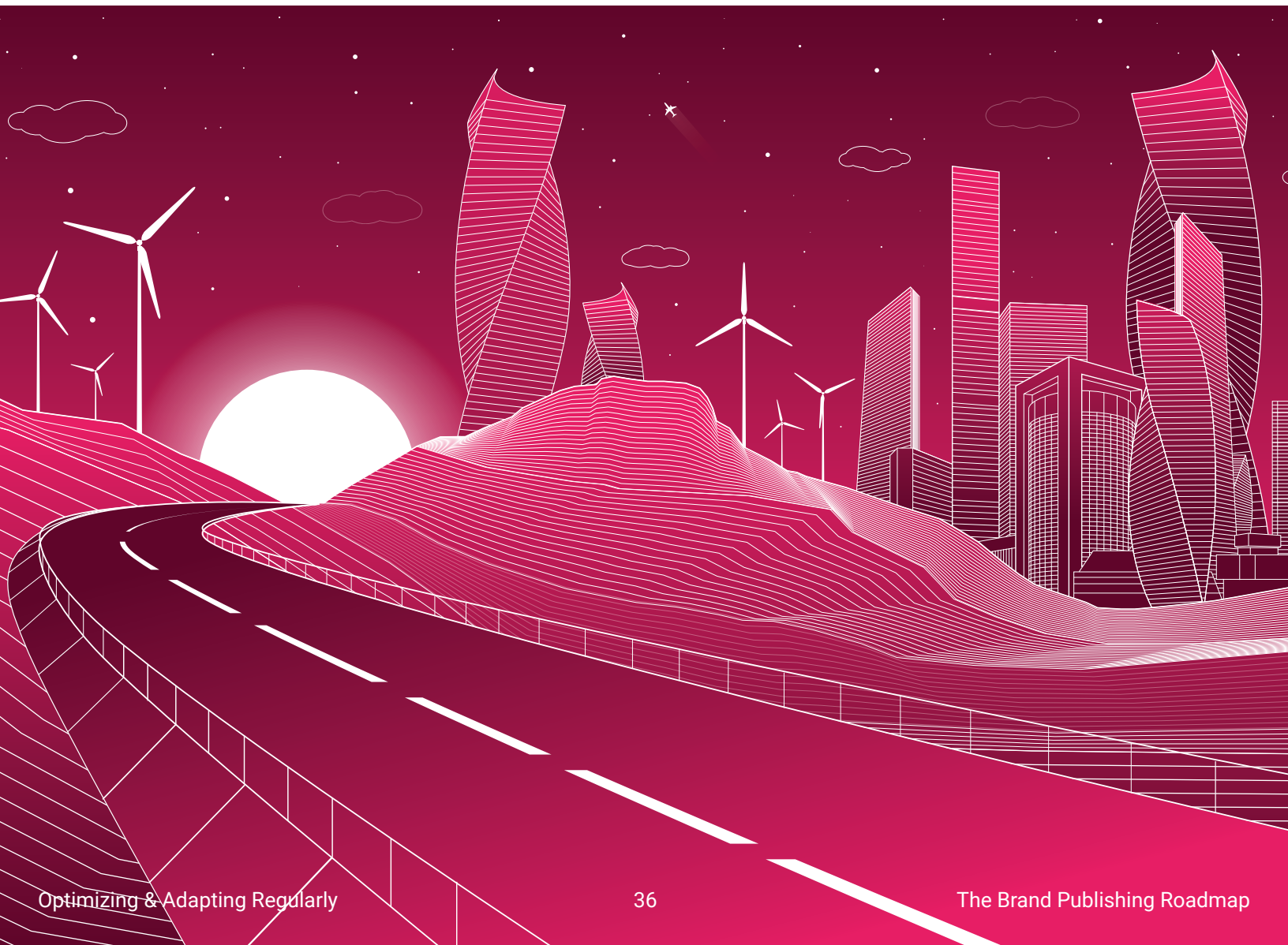
Add "listening" to the mix. Though some of these measures might be more qualitative than quantitative, brands are smart to monitor consumer conversations, community engagement, brand sentiment, customer feedback and more.

Drive Carefully

Your Brand Publishing Roadmap doesn't have the intelligence of a GPS system. It won't adapt on the fly if you make a wrong turn.

It's on you to conduct analytics regularly and adjust as needed, adapting your structure, schedules, content direction and so forth. Brand publishers who want to see results and continually optimize performance focus on data that matters—metrics that can offer actionable intelligence about content production.

The point of this final chapter is your company must believe in measurement and become dedicated to perpetual refinement.



Step 7

Give Your Powerful Content a Powerful Platform

PowerPost turns your brand into a powerful brand publisher in two essential ways:

Virtual Newsroom

PowerPost serves as your virtual newsroom. We employ dedicated journalists to increase your brand influence and reduce your dependency on expensive agencies.

We use the *Brand Publishing Roadmap* detailed in this document to define and craft your brand's narrative, produce content that excites and inspires, and curate thoughtful content across digital channels.

Marketing Software Platform

PowerPost relies on its own platform, a SaaS solution expressly developed to support enterprise-level content publishing operations at scale. Clients benefit from:

SEAMLESS COLLABORATION

Enhanced workflow features improve and perfect the process required to deliver consistently.

FASTER CONTENT CREATION

An integrated content hub provides unparalleled access to content from any source.

INSTANT DISTRIBUTION

PowerPost makes it easy to distribute messaging across digital channels to expand your reach, grow your audience, and increase revenue.

PERFORMANCE VALIDATION

Powerful analytics features enable users to continuously assess, accelerate and measure data for maximum marketing performance. industry specific websites and forums.

Become A Brand Publisher

Partner with PowerPost to create your Brand Publishing Roadmap.

