

**content strategy:
creating it and selling it
internally and externally**

**hilary marsh
molly wright steenson**

What we'll discuss tonight

- What is content strategy?
- What tools are used in creating it?
- How do I sell content strategy to my teammates, my clients, and their stakeholders?

what is
content
strategy?

Content strategy: what is it?

- In very simple terms, it's the who, what, when, where, why, and how of all the content a site or experience will offer.
- It's an activity and process that can be owned by any number of team members (content strategist, information architect, producer, strategist...)

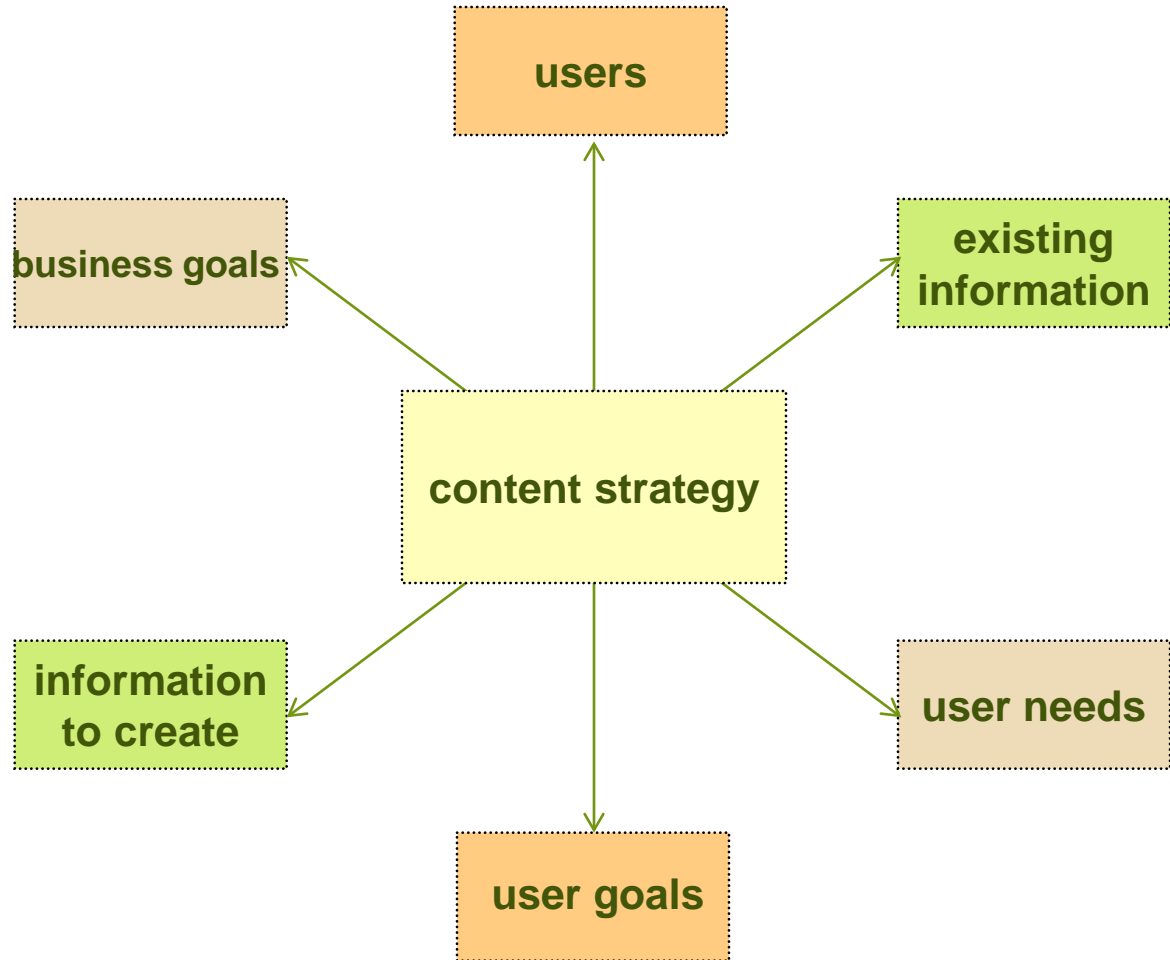
Content strategy: what is it?

Content strategy is the area between:

- users and what they need to accomplish
- business/strategic goals and user needs
- information that exists (on a site, in paper, in people's heads) and information that needs to be created to fulfill user goals

Where content strategy resides

These six points need to be considered in order to create a content strategy.



Content strategy: what is it?

Content strategy answers questions like:

- What message does a site need to communicate?
- What message do the site's users want to hear?
- What content will enable the site to support those needs?
- What channels will the content be delivered over?
- How will the content be managed?

Content strategy: what is it?

It also considers:

- How much content will there need to be?
- Who will create the content? edit it? approve it? post it?
- How often will the dynamic content need to be updated?
- What will happen to the site's dynamic content once it's not displayed on the site?
- Can the client's current content from other sources be repurposed for the site?

What if the client wants to skip content strategy?

Tremendous risks:

- They'll build the site, and no one will come
- They'll build the site, and frustrated users will flood the call center
- They'll build the site, and visits will drop off dramatically after the first few weeks
- They'll build the site, and nothing will change about their business

What goes into content strategy?

First, the business goals...

You've been hired for a reason. What is your client or team trying to accomplish?

- Interview the stakeholders. Know what's important.
- Understand the brand strategy – this affects your tone and style.
- Put metrics to the business imperatives (as a team). What successes can you actually measure?
- Know the pitfalls. Watch the internal politics.

... and quite vitally, your users

Understand your users: what are their goals? their needs? their pain points? what do they *not* need?

- Research your users (this is a whole long topic of its own) – go stand in their shoes
- Create personas and stories about your users
- Segment your users (by activity, role, age, interest – think beyond demographics)

Then define what your users need to do

Tasks – you need to outline what people are going to do on the site

- It's the mix of business goals and user needs. What is the purpose of the site and what does it take to get it done?
- Task definition should be a team activity (could include business analyst, information architect, interaction designer...)
- Also consider internal tasks: what needs to happen to keep the site up-to-date?

Define the content

What information is required to support the business, the users, and the tasks?

- It's not just textual: it can come in many different forms
- Need to know what's there already...
 - Online
 - Offline
 - In people's heads
- ... and what needs to be created or deleted.

Some types of content

Textual

- articles, columns
- news items
- online course content
- links
- instructional text
- navigational text
- job listings
- company information
- forums/bulletin boards
- recommended selections
- product descriptions
- legal information
- customer service policies

More types of content

Visual

- photos
- illustrations
- streaming audio
- streaming video
- Flash movies
- animations
- games
- maps
- interactive greeting cards/postcards

Data:

- forms
- stock quotes

tools

Tools and activities to define content strategy

- Content inventory: what's there?
- Content audit: what should stay? what can go? what shape is the content in? what's missing?
- Content matrix: output of the content audit, then a living, breathing document that tracks much information about the site's content
- Content strategy document: answers questions about audience, tone and style, workflow, conceptual model, editorial platforms
- Style guide: makes it possible for a writer to create content for the site based on the initial choices and guidelines