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# Web Content Strategy

How to Plan for, Create and Publish  
Online Content for Maximum ROI

6 February 2009



# Hello! I'm Kristina Halvorson (@halvorson)

- President and Founder of Brain Traffic
- We analyze, organize, structure, and write websites
- Worked on hundreds of website redesign projects since 1997
- Train marketers all over the country to plan, create, and manage web content
- Believe that content matters most and should always be considered first





# Hi! I'm Joe Pulizzi (@juntajoe)

- Founder and Chief Content Officer for Junta42
- We find content experts to turnkey your web content projects
- Co-author of Get Content. Get Authors. (paperback available in June from McGraw-Hill)
- Speak around the globe about content marketing and how marketers need to be publishers
- You'll never see me without wearing something that is colored orange...ever

Me

Your Fearless Leader





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THE MOTIVATIONAL INTRODUCTION:

Why Content and Why Now?



# Marketer or Publisher?





# You Are a Publisher

- Like it or not, you are a publisher, and you need to start acting like one.
- Look at your web marketing activities...starting to feel a lot more like publishing.



Landing Pages



Datafeeds



Audio



Online News Releases



eBooks



Search Engines



Virtual Worlds



Conversations & Commentary



Social Networking



Content Lens



# What is content?

- Text

**A Long History. A Bright Future.**

- In business for over 70 years
- A subsidiary of Berkshire Hathaway, led by investment icon, Warren Buffett
- 3rd largest U.S. automobile insurer

- Graphics



- Video (or Flash)



- Audio

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09.26.2008 [+] 364: Going Big 🔊 📄 💰



# Why does content matter?

- It tells your story.
- It answers people's questions.
- It inspires and entertains.
- It motivates.
- It drives decision-making.
- It manages expectations.
- It brings your brand to life.
- It builds – or breaks – trust.



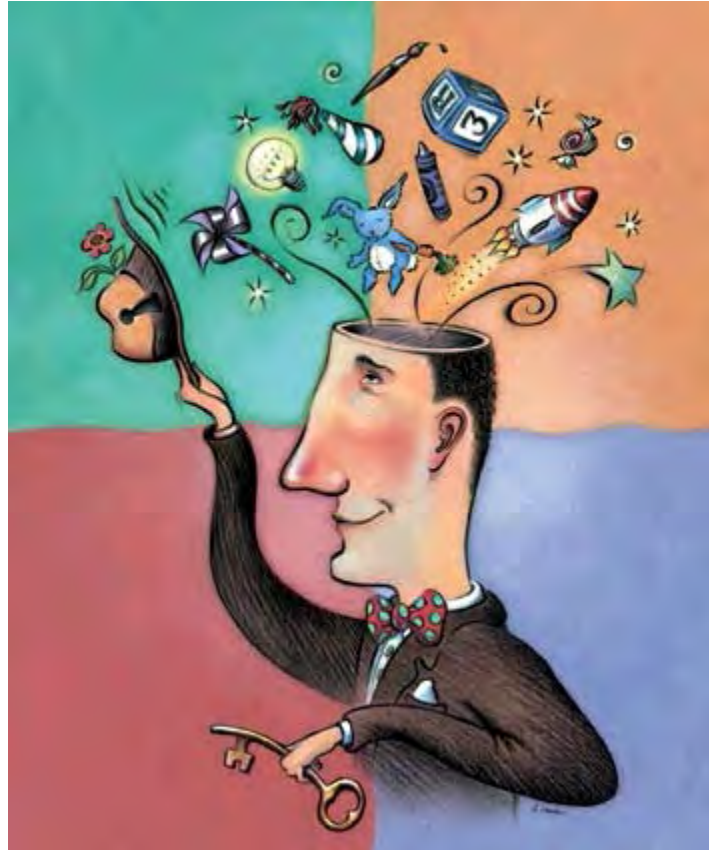


## Why does content REALLY matter?

- It's what informs customer action ... or *I*naction ... both online and off



# Take the Sales Hat Off





# The Publisher Mindset

Organizations are just now beginning to understand that, along with the products and services that they offer, one of their core products is

**information.**

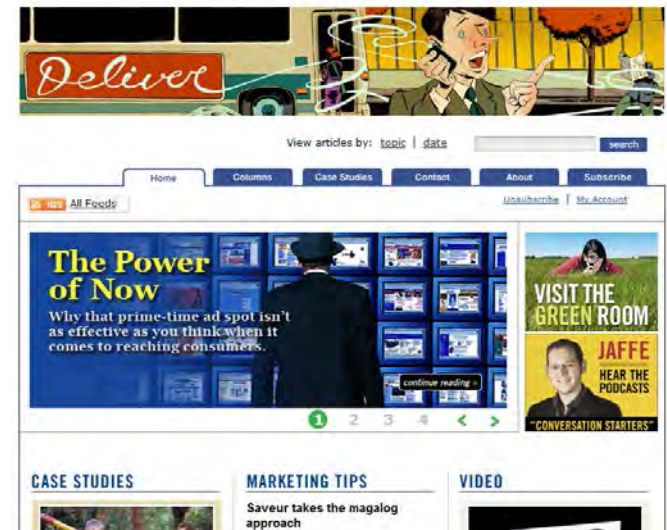
If not the most important one...

BECOMING  
THE MEDIA



# Something to Notice about Media Content

- The content is always about what the reader needs or wants, not about the company itself.
- This is where most marketers go wrong – they want to talk about their needs/their products/their services.
- It's all about your customer.





# A Look at Social Media

For social media to work, it starts with giving something valuable to your customers (can't be your products and services).

Listen, then talk...





What this is all about...

**Branded Content**

**Content Marketing**

**Content Strategy**

The art of understanding what your customers need to know and delivering it to them in a compelling way.

**Custom Publishing**

**Custom Media**

**Customer Media**

**Information Marketing**



# The Evolution Has Begun

- Marketers are starting to get it.
- 56% of marketers are increasing their spending on content creation in 2009 (only 13% decrease)\*
- Are you going to be the trusted solutions provider, or possibly your competitor?



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## The Problem and its Impact





# Lots of attention paid to “shuffling” content ...

## Manage ...

- content manager
- content administrator
- content engineer
- content coordinator
- content systems lead
- content processor
- content technician
- content assistant

## Structure ...

- information architect
- information designer
- information systems lead
- information technologist
- information coordinator
- information manager
- information specialist
- information representative

## Design and share ...

- experience design
- social media
- metrics + analytics
- content marketing
- behavioral targeting
- mobile marketing
- seo
- and on and on ...



But not much attention is paid to creating and overseeing the content, itself.

- Sourcing
- Copywriting
- Editing
- Proofreading

... Where are we going wrong?

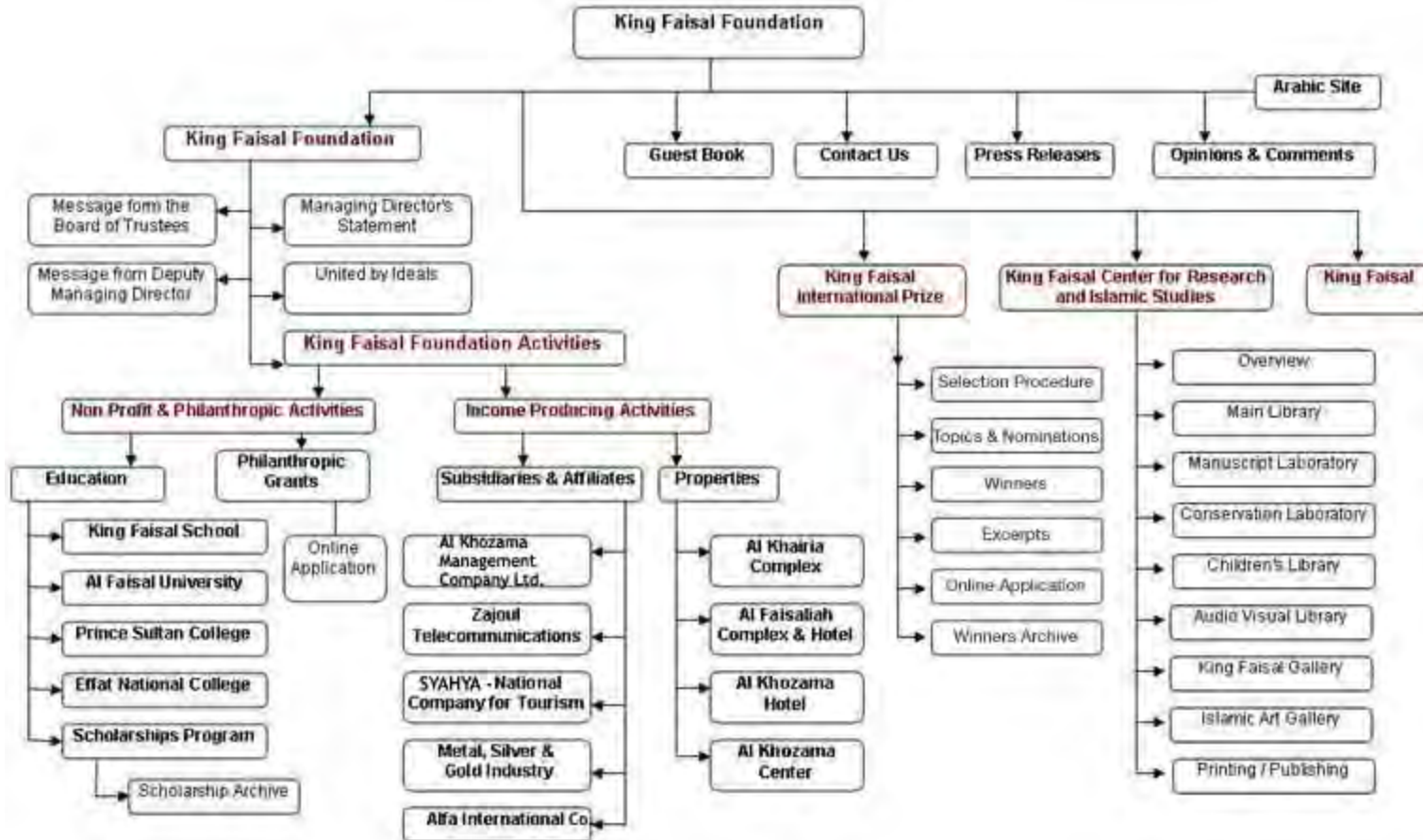


# Discovery and Definition





# Site structure ...

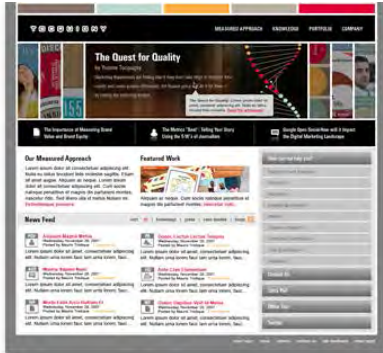




# Visual design ...

# Technical requirements ...

Concept A



Concept B



Concept C

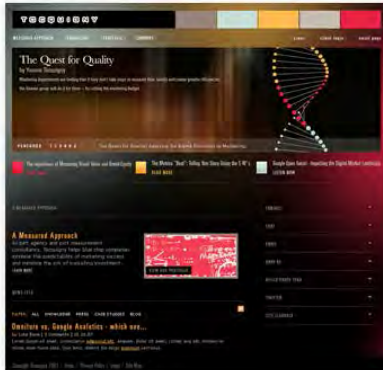
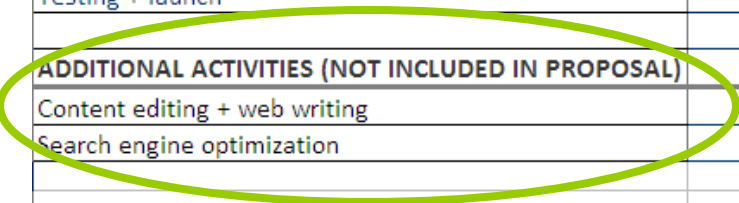
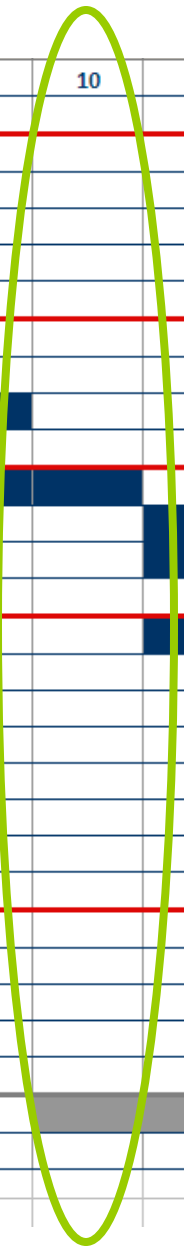


TABLE 4. TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS BY INFRASTRUCTURE

Application	Directory	Security	Web
Research tool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Subscribe user</li> <li>Maintain profiles (employee, user)</li> <li>Maintain distribution lists</li> <li>Maintain Web rules/library</li> <li>Maintain security policy and rules</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Control access</li> <li>Harden servers</li> <li>Monitor/alert</li> <li>Authenticate user</li> <li>Encrypt/decrypt messages</li> <li>Scan for viruses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Load content</li> <li>Query/display</li> <li>Encrypt/decrypt via SSL</li> <li>Access legacy</li> <li>Personalize session</li> <li>Produce/dosplay advisory</li> </ul>
Core system interface	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide access to and delivery of descriptive data to manage and support security and Web services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Authenticate user</li> <li>Encrypt/decrypt transaction</li> <li>Sign transaction</li> <li>Secure transaction history</li> <li>Control access</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Order transaction</li> <li>Access legacy/submit</li> </ul>
Trade confirmation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide access to and delivery of descriptive data to manage and support security, Web and messaging</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Harden servers</li> <li>Monitor/alert</li> <li>Encrypt postmark</li> <li>Authenticate user</li> <li>Secure transaction history</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produce enclosure</li> <li>Encrypt/decrypt via SSL</li> <li>Display enclosure</li> <li>Record receipt</li> <li>Enclose cross-selling brochures</li> </ul>

# TYPICAL WEB PROJECT SCHEDULE

Week:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
<b>PHASE 1: USER EXPERIENCE STRATEGY + RESEARCH</b>												
Kick-off meeting (half-day working session)	█	█										
Audit of current architecture, metrics + research	█	█	█									
Features + functionality set + strategy development			█	█								
Presentation of Site Strategy					█							
<b>PHASE 2: INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE</b>												
Site map						█	█					
Interaction diagrams							█	█				
Detailed wireframes								█	█			
<b>PHASE 3: INTERFACE DESIGN + PROTOTYPE</b>												
Initial design development									█	█		
Refined design											█	█
Detailed design prototype												█
<b>PHASE 4: USER VALIDATION TESTING + REFINEMENT</b>												
Definition of recruiting criteria + screener												█
Recruiting occurs												█
Test planning												
Facilitation / research occurs												
Analysis occurs												
Presentation of recommendations												
Refinement of deliverables												
<b>PHASE 5: TEMPLATES, STANDARDS + DEVELOPMENT</b>												
Templates + standards documentation												
Technical development												
Testing + launch												
<b>ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES (NOT INCLUDED IN PROPOSAL)</b>												
Content editing + web writing												█
Search engine optimization												█





# Time to “go get the content ...”





# Where IS the content?



Files for this project List view | Download all files

REIMBURSEMENT\_IDOSPASTICITY

- Bibliography\_ITB.pdf**  
By: University of California Documents (2296) - Updated 11/10/2009
- IMPLANT\_TECH\_IDOSPASTICITY.ZIP**  
By: University of California Documents (181470) - Updated 11/10/2009
- REIMBURSEMENT\_IDOSPASTICITY.ZIP**  
By: University of California Documents (4489) - Updated 11/10/2009
- PATENTMANUALS\_DBS.ZIP**  
By: University of California Documents (116300) - Updated 11/10/2009
- REIMBURSEMENT\_DBS.ZIP**  
By: University of California Documents (13784) - Updated 11/10/2009
- CLINICAL\_OUTCOMES\_SPINALSTIM.ZIP**  
This is the last of the content for spinal stim.  
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## Here's what happens next.

- No one has time.
- No one wants to deal with the complexities.
- The writer is overwhelmed by requirements, scope, gaps, and so on.
- The people who didn't care too much about the project at first come out of the woodwork with new demands.
- The people in charge of creating the website don't have the tools to help you get your arms around the content.
- No one has time to think about what happens to the content *after* it launches ... which means the content quality has no oversight ... which puts you right back at square one in less than a year.



And there goes your schedule/budget/outcome.





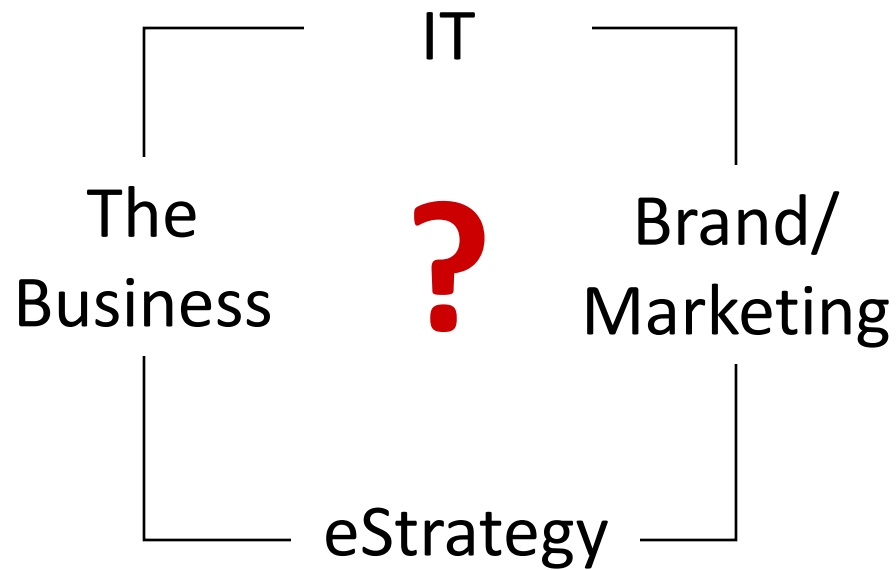
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The Solution –  
Start with Content Strategy



# Who should own the content?





## Fact #1

### **Content is messy.**

- It's overwhelming.
- It's political.
- It's last-minute.
- It's a moving target.



## Fact #2

**Content is far more complicated than we want to accept or believe.**

- Audit
- Analyze
- Strategize
- Categorize
- Structure
- Create
- Review
- Approve
- Publish
- Update
- Archive





## Fact #3

Content is out of your control.





It's a fact.

**Content planning and oversight require dedicated resources:  
time, skill, and meaningful spend.**



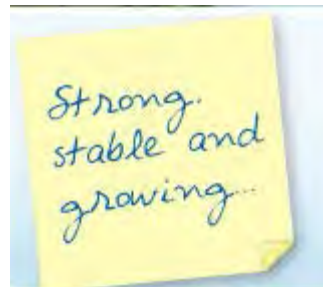




# You are a publisher!

## A Long History. A Bright Future.

- In business for over 70 years
- A subsidiary of Berkshire Hathaway, led by investment icon, Warren Buffett
- 3rd largest U.S. automobile insurer



September

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[+] 364: Going Big





## What is content strategy?

- Content strategy is planning for the creation of useful, usable content.
- Not just WHAT you're going to publish and WHERE, but WHY.
- Content strategy isn't just deciding what you're going to include. It's deciding what you're going to leave out.

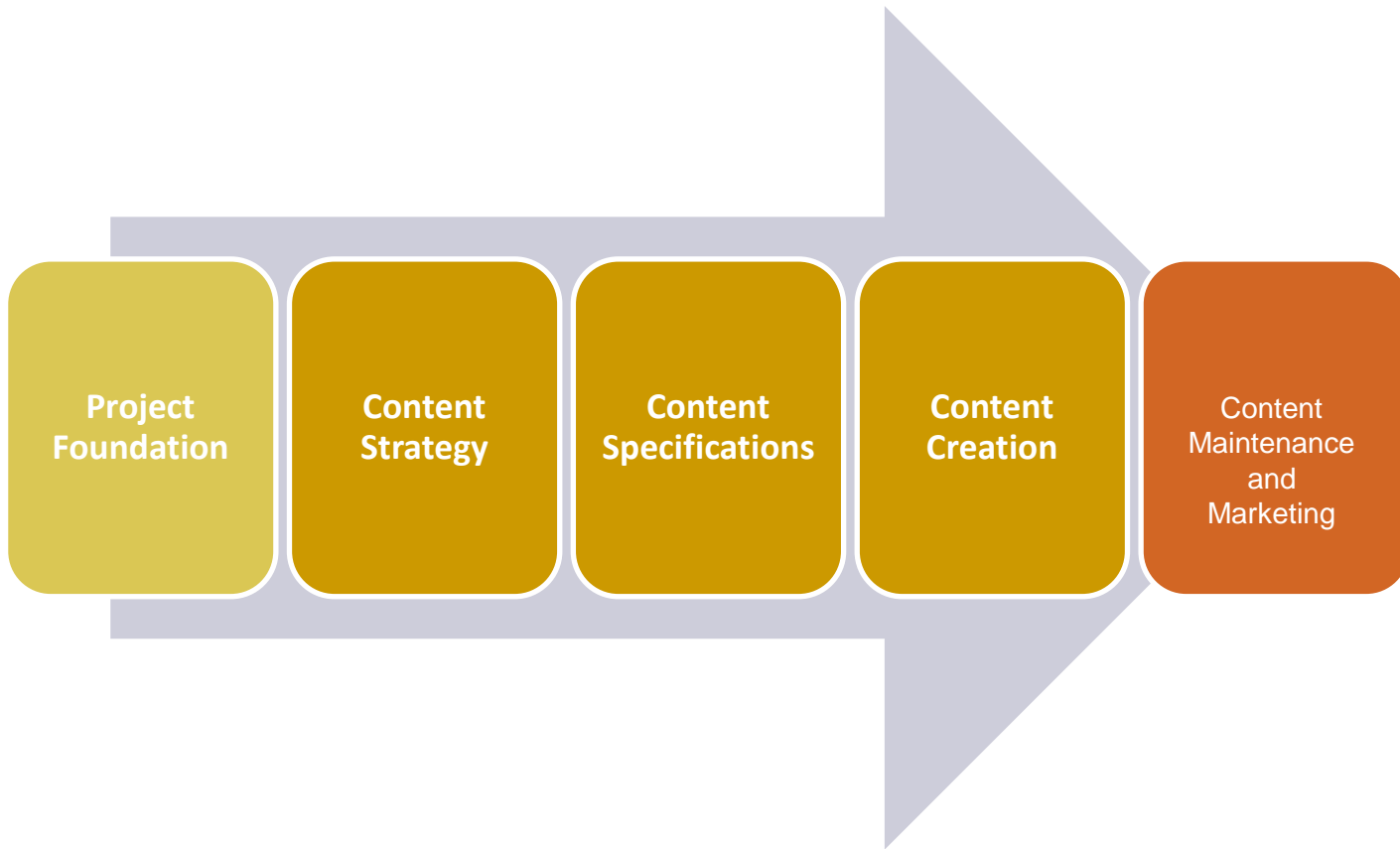


## A web content strategy ...

- Acts as a benchmark for all content-related decisions.
- Offers real-world context for tactical recommendations.
- Facilitates discussion between (and sign-off from) key stakeholders.
- Engages content providers and reviewers early in the web project process.
- Identifies key themes and messages for web writers to use.
- Informs site information architecture.
- Drives metadata creation and assignment.



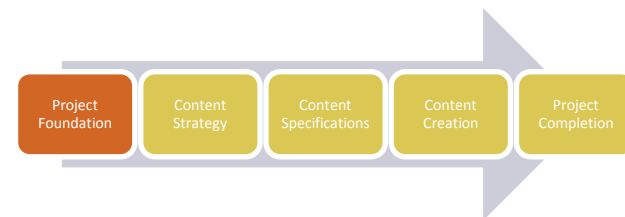
# How does this work?





# Website Foundation

- What are my business objectives?
  - What are my users' (customers') goals?
  - Any content that doesn't meet these needs is just getting in the way.
- 
- ▶ **Avoid wasting money on designing, creating and maintaining unnecessary content.**
  - ▶ **Keep project teams aligned throughout the process.**



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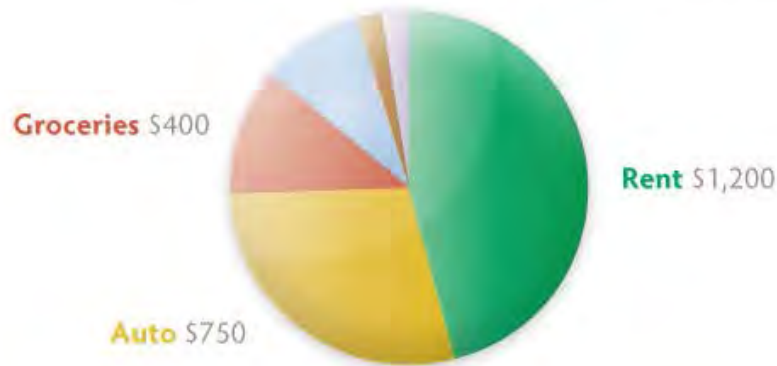
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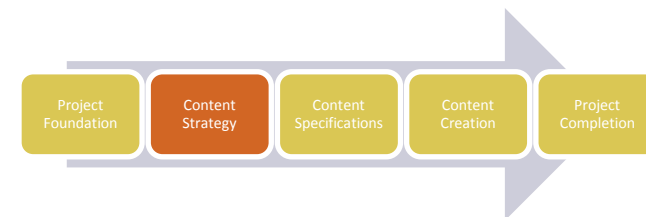
What the press is saying





# Website Content Strategy

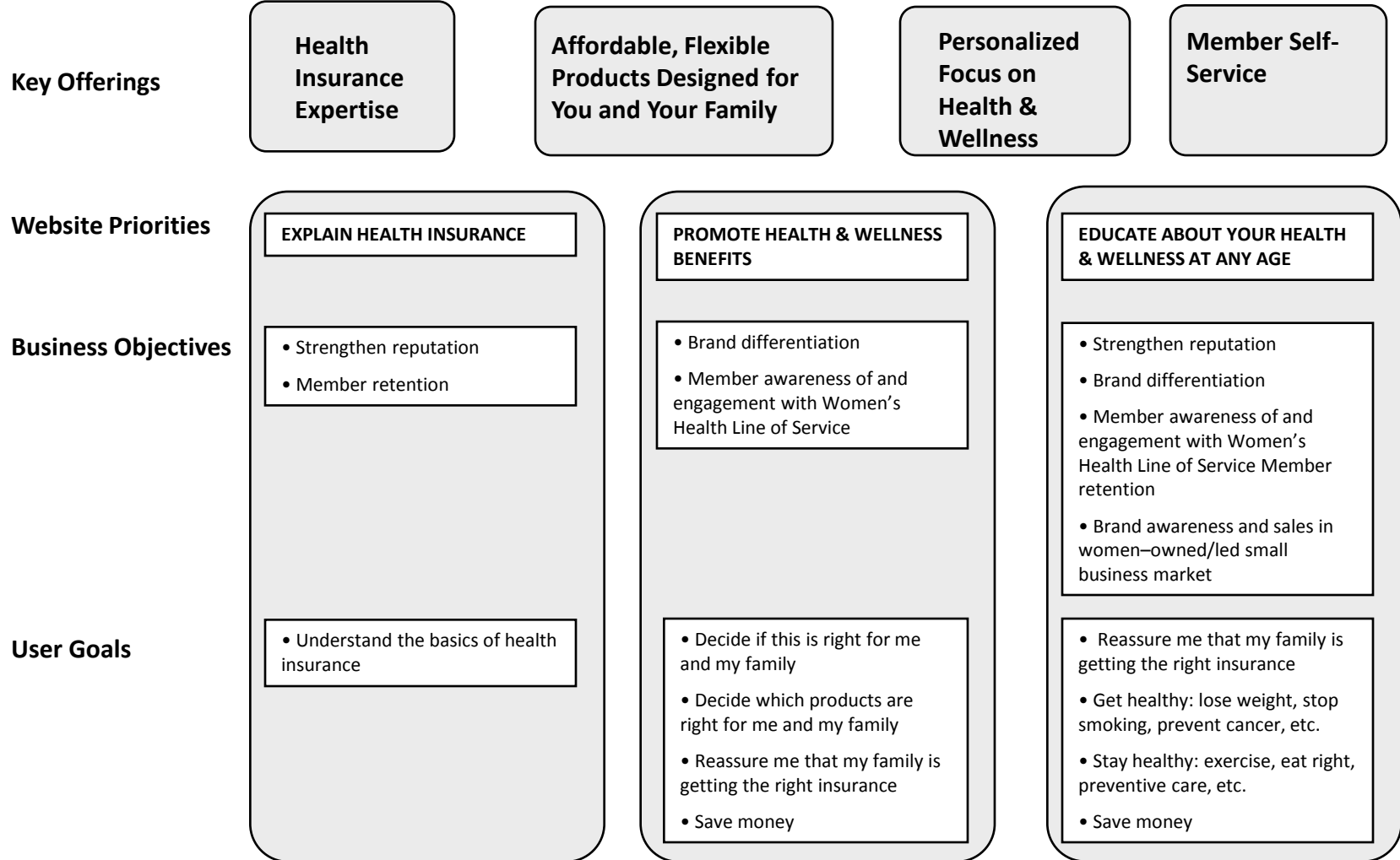
- What content do we want to create, and why?
  - How are we going to create it?
  - What will happen to it once it goes up on the site?
- ▶ **Plan strategically for required content, scope realistically, then scale according to time and budget.**





# Mapping content to real objectives and goals

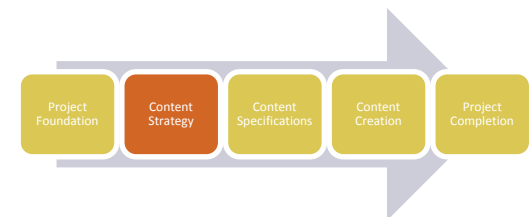
EXAMPLE





# Website Content Strategy: Content Audit

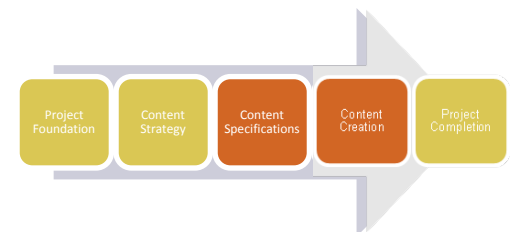
- Possibly the most important thing you can do to avoid scope creep and minimize risk
  - Catalog web pages, print materials, all communications
  - Conduct a gap analysis
- ▶ **Don't commit to content you can't create or maintain**





# Content Specifications and Creation

- Get real-world content specifications as early as possible
  - Identify who is responsible for providing, reviewing, and approving the content before writing begins
  - Train or hire web writers ... it's a very, very different process and medium from print
  - Keep the content audit up-to-date to eliminate redundant workflows among various communicators
- ▶ **Ensure quality and quantity control, informed by clear recommendations and overseen by dedicated resources**





# Who's going to do all this work?



MARKETING



THE BUSINESS



IT SOLUTIONS



E-STRATEGY



SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGIST



CONTENT STRATEGIST



INFORMATION ARCHITECT



DESIGNER



SEO/ANALYTICS



WEB EDITOR



CONTENT ANALYST



VIDEOGRAPHER



AUDIO PRODUCER



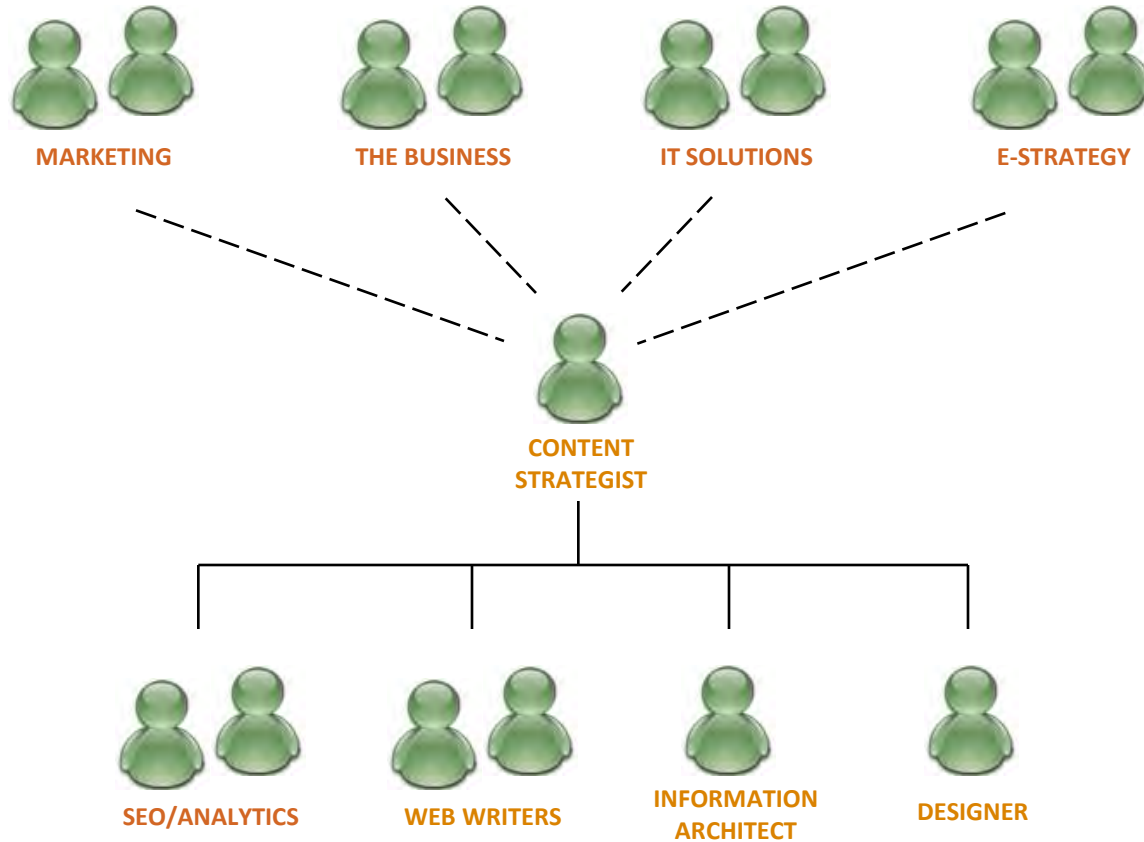
WEB WRITERS



QA/PROOFREADERS



# Start strategically. Start small.





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IN CLOSING

Your Key Takeaways



# Business Impact of a Content Strategy

- **QUALITATIVE**
  - Engages all stakeholders early in the website project process to ensure alignment, investment, and accountability around content creation and maintenance
  - Provides accessible documentation for all project team members to help judge proposed content effectiveness with regard to business objectives and user goals
  - Results in higher quality content, which improves customer satisfaction, sales leads, online service and support, trust in brand, and so on
  - Creates true content accountability for all project members early in the process
  - Facilitates future state content planning (editorial oversight, expansion, maintenance)





# Business Impact of a Content Strategy

- **QUANTITATIVE** (*anecdotal*)
  - Projects driven by web content strategies are completed in up to 25% less time than design-centered projects
  - Assuming stakeholders and business requirements remain the same, scope changes during content creation phase happen less than 10% of the time
  - Client satisfaction with final product is close to 100%
  - Measurable project objectives are realized within 3-6 months post-launch (with appropriate supporting communications)



## In conclusion ...

- ▶ Web content is a critical business asset worthy of meaningful spend.
- ▶ A website content strategy helps you focus resources on what customers care about, constantly.
- ▶ Don't get suckered by agency hype for flashy visuals or Web 2.0 features ... stay focused on what you want to say, and why
- ▶ Web content is too complicated and time-consuming to be someone's "sort of" job.
- ▶ Make content matter most in your next redesign project



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THAT'S IT FOR TODAY

Thanks!

Kristina Halvorson

[kristina@braintraffic.com](mailto:kristina@braintraffic.com)

(612) 331-6600

@halvorson

Joe Pulizzi

[joe@junta42.com](mailto:joe@junta42.com)

(216) 941-5842

@juntajoe