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I de-mystify SEO and online marketing for business owners.

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The Top 7 Content Marketing Trends That Will Dominate 2015

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Content marketing is bigger than ever; content creation and publication is at an all-time high, and traditional marketing budgets are being reallocated to content marketing efforts. However, despite its pervasive usage, content marketing isn't without its struggles.

In this article, I'll outline some of the significant challenges marketers will face this year when it comes to content marketing, as well as looking at trends we're likely to see during 2015.

In case you missed my 2014 predictions and trends on content marketing, you can check them out here:

[The Top 7 Content Marketing Trends That Will Dominate 2014](#) (Written Oct. 2013)

[The Top 7 Content Marketing Trends Dominating 2014](#) (Written Aug. 2014)

1. Companies will learn that publication is only the small first step; value comes from distribution

Most businesses have gotten the message that content creation and publication are the cornerstones of a content marketing strategy. However, where many are still lagging significantly is in the distribution of that content. According to research by [Altimeter](#), only 26% of marketers are investing in content distribution, even though more than half believe they need to.

Strategic distribution of content is what will set businesses apart in this hyper-competitive landscape. Optimizing for search and mobile, building relationships with branded publications, and reaching out to influencers in your field are just a few ways to make sure your content reaches your target market. For an overview of creating your own content distribution model, see my article, [Why No One's Reading Your Marketing Content](#).

2. Content marketing will become inextricably linked with social media marketing

Perhaps the most important way businesses are distributing their content is through social media sharing. As businesses realize that social media is an amplifier for content, they'll embrace social media to aid in its distribution. While the vast majority of marketers already know the importance of social media in their marketing (94% say it's an important part of their marketing mix), in 2015 we'll see businesses more fully realize its role as the capstone of any distribution model.

This focus on social media distribution will lead not only to increased organic usage, but also to increased paid social media advertising. Businesses will increase their spending, particularly on Twitter, LinkedIn, and [Facebook](#) ads and promoted posts. Smart marketers will use these social ads not only to extend the reach of their content, but to generate leads through gating the content they advertise.

For more on how social media marketing benefits a content marketing campaign and how to implement a campaign, see "[The Top 10 Benefits of Social Media Marketing](#)" and "[The Definitive Guide to Social Media Marketing](#)."

3. Advertisements will become less blatant as marketers begin to favor ads integrated with content

We've already seen the rise in native advertising among publishers like BuzzFeed, The New York Times, and Forbes. With banner ads being largely ineffective for anything but perhaps brand visibility, native ads like advertorials, sponsored content and branded content have become much more popular and effective.

Just as with product placement in movies, advertisers will embrace advertisements placed strategically within great content rather than being blatant with their advertising. Publishers and advertisers will work together to ensure paid content actually brings value to the user experience, and that it works seamlessly (and transparently) with existing content.

4. Companies who embrace content marketing will achieve higher search engine rankings

As I wrote in [The Top 7 Online Marketing Trends That Will Dominate 2015](#), SEO and content marketing now go hand-in-hand; better, more frequent content will attract links, shares, and other brand-building signals that will boost rankings.

In looking at the [factors that determine search engine rankings](#), we see that high-quality, long-form content, and content with many social media likes and shares, consistently rank highest. We also [know](#) that longer content tends to attract more attention on social media; so whether social signals directly lead to higher search rankings or not, the indirect benefits of in-depth content are clear.

SEO will continue to be an important part of the marketing mix, but it will increasingly become about technical aspects like keyword research, indexing issues, meta tags and penalty recovery. Content marketing, on the other hand, will become the key driver of search engine rankings.

5. The reputation of guest blogging as a content marketing strategy will be repaired

When Matt Cutts [pronounced](#) it “done” earlier this year, he triggered a mass exodus away from guest blogging. However, due to misinterpretations of his comments, he later clarified that his declaration against guest blogging was meant to discourage marketers from using it solely as a link building technique: “I’m not trying to throw the baby out with the bath water. There are still many good reasons to do some guest blogging (exposure, branding, increased reach, community, etc.)”

Smart content marketers know the difference between what Cutts was addressing and real, legitimate, value-adding guest blogging. They know that legitimate guest blogging is not about article marketing or advertorials, but

about contributing excellent, relevant content to high-quality publishers. And they understand that there are many [benefits of guest blogging](#) other than just inbound links for SEO.

Although guest blogging has taken a lot of flack this year, come 2015, enough time will have passed that it will again rise as a popular strategy.

For help with your own guest blogging initiative, check out these posts:

- [How to Run a Successful Guest Blogging Campaign After Penguin 2.0.](#)
- [The Ultimate, Step-by-Step Guide to Building Your Business by Guest Blogging](#)
- [Guest Blogging Dead? Not Even Close](#)

6. Budgets for content marketing across most industries will reach new record-highs

According to the [2014 B2B Content Marketing Benchmarks report](#), 58% of B2B marketers plan to increase their content marketing budgets over the coming year, and of this group, 10% plan to increase it significantly. As marketers and [business](#) owners experience the many benefits of content marketing, they'll be willing to increase their investment in it, dedicating money previously used for SEO campaigns.

This investment will mean increased funds for the creation of diverse types of content: white papers, blog posts, syndicated content, case studies, videos, mobile-specific content and more. However, marketers will also increase their spending on the distribution of this content through paid media and earned media.

7. Content marketers will become more sophisticated when it comes to email marketing

In previous years, email marketing has largely been perceived as a way to distribute existing content such as blog posts and to promote paid products and content to subscribers. However, this model is steadily declining in terms of effectiveness, and smart marketers will need to find new ways of achieving their content marketing goals through email.

A recent [survey](#) by Hubspot found that people are less likely than ever to make a purchase from email messages they've received. Add to this that many people are frustrated by increased spam and are less likely to actually read all

their emails, and the challenge becomes clear: create relevant, compelling email content that your subscribers will actually want to read and engage with.

Conclusion

Content marketing may be bigger than ever, but marketers need to be strategic and adaptive in how they carry out their content strategies. 2015 will be the year when content distribution moves to the forefront, while SEO becomes more about working behind the scenes to ensure technical compliance. Social media and email marketing will need to become more sophisticated to reach an increasingly wary audience, and will come to be seen as amplifiers of distribution for content strategies.

What are your predictions for content marketing in 2015? Share with us below!

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