5 VITAL CLASSES OF CONTENT

A Framework for B2B Content Success
In the B2B world where long buying cycles mean that the role of content is stretched over a wide length of time, it’s absolutely essential for marketers to employ the full spectrum of content, each with its own specific purpose, or desired effect on your buyer.
Content Drive Buying Decisions

Content is the vehicle in which a company tells its story. It highlights the product, the team, what they have to offer, and ultimately does or does not drive conversions.

The role of content cannot be ignored – it is solely what prospects engage with during the majority of the buyer’s journey.

That means that if content doesn’t do its job, buyers are out the door and onto the next vendor before even speaking to a sales rep.

70% of the Buyer’s Journey is complete before engaging the vendor

87% of B2B Buyers say that content has an impact on vendor selection

SiriusDecisions

Social Media Today
Introducing a Framework for Content with a Purpose

In order for content to successfully engage and convert buyers, it must tell the entire story of a company. Only then will content both educate and connect with buyers in all the ways they need to be throughout their long buying journey.

Effectively telling the entire story of a company is not simple – rather, there are multiple layers to achieving this, and as such requires employing multiple classes of content.

In fact, there are five essential content classes, and employing them altogether is the most successful way to tell the full story. Think of these content classes as a pyramid with five layers moving from the base to the tip. At the bottom of the pyramid is the foundational content that highlights the product and company, and moving up the pyramid is content that engages audiences on a deeper level, motivating them to act.

Each content class in the pyramid is defined by its purpose, or the specific effect on the buyer that it is aiming to achieve. Why define class by purpose? One: content is developed more effectively when you know its end goal. And two: defining content classes by purpose will help ensure you’re engaging the buyer on all necessary levels, which will ultimately keep them moving through the buying cycle and on to conversion. The pyramid, therefore, acts as a framework for content with a purpose.
Informational content includes the facts, figures, details, and explanations of a company and its offerings.

Successful informational content helps your buyer understand how your product fits their needs, how it works, and how it resolves their problems.

Purpose: *Build confidence and knowledge in your product*

*Your product is great!*
Types of informational content include data sheets, product pages, case studies, and press releases.
CONTENT CLASS #2

Contextual

Purpose: *Build confidence and respect for your company and its position in your industry*

Contextual content includes thought-leadership, best practices, and market trends, insights, and analysis. It shows that your company is the industry expert.

Effective contextual content proves to your buyer that they can trust you for the best innovations and for reliable advice. Not only does your product meet the buyer’s needs, but your team behind the product understands the market and how best the buyer can tackle their challenges.
Types of contextual content includes blogs, whitepapers, solution pages, webinars, and contributed articles.
Emotional content includes anecdotes and imagery of everyday life and successes and situations that people can relate to and connect with.

Emotional content is a big leap from highlighting the company and its product to focusing more on the audience. It causes buyers to feel good about the company – not in that they can trust and rely on them, but in that they feel the company can relate to them. Emotional content drives positive vibes.
Types of emotional content include images, videos, and blogs.
Motivational content includes stories of courage to pursue the new and different and pushes buyers to take on big challenges, and to push the boundaries.

Successful motivational content propels buyers into motion by showing them the impact they can make.

Purpose: *Incite your audience into taking a desired action*

*I am going to take action!*
Types of motivational content include case studies, research reports, and industry stories.
Inspirational content includes novel perspectives and stories of dreams and visions. It focuses on the human condition and changes how we think, what we do, and how we relate to others. Inspirational content drives the buyer to think beyond their direct role and impact to how they can bring significantly larger benefits to their company and their own customers as a whole.

Purpose: Influence your buyer’s beliefs on what is possible

I am going to change the world!
Types of inspirational content include videos, blogs, and microsites.
The stages of the buyer’s journey typically include: Discovering, Learning, Choosing, and Procuring.

By leveraging a framework for content with a purpose, you can provide a balanced content approach that ignites intellectual, emotional, and passionate engagement with your buyers – all of which are imperative to keeping prospects moving through the buyer’s journey. Conversely, if you do not employ all classes of content, you will lose prospects at some stage.

Indeed, every marketer and sales rep has suffered three common content pitfalls with buyers that result in losing them at some stage in the buying cycle to a competitive alternative. Likewise, successes can come in multiple forms as well.
Pitfall #1

Only Information Content

You may focus purely on informational content, so your product may sound great to the buyer, but they leave in Choosing as they find another provider that appears to understand their business challenges and market place better.

Nice product, but we have gone with another vendor that understands our needs better.
No Emotional Connection

You provide both informational and contextual content, but you have no emotional connection to the buyer so they exit very late in the sales process. In fact, you may be left guessing as to why they chose a different product because they simply disappeared.
Pitfall #3

All Fluff

You provide too much fluff content, and your buyer immediately leaves in Learning because the content lacks specificity and product details. In fact, you will likely never even know this buyer exists because they will not choose to engage before looking elsewhere to solve their business needs.

I don’t understand what your product can do.
Success #1

Connecting Emotionally

You provide buyers with informational and contextual content and start to establish an emotional connection as well.

I really want you guys to win!
Unlock the Status Quo

You provide motivational content on top of establishing an emotional connection and a foundation of trust and credibility, thereby spurring buyers into action that were previously stuck in their buying process.

We weren’t ready to move on this, but now we are.
Content Nirvana

You engage your buyer leveraging every class of content up through motivational and inspirational, and the buyer gloriously declares that they are ready to work with you.

Success #3

Let’s find a way to do business together.
Especially in the B2B world where long buying cycles mean that the role of content is stretched over a wide length of time, it’s absolutely essential for marketers to employ all five classes of content, each of which has its own specific purpose, or desired effect on your buyer. When used in its entirety, the content with a purpose framework ensures that you engage with prospects in all the ways you need to engage with them in order to convert them. As a result, you establish a more relevant and powerful connection with buyers, from understanding your product and company to feeling good about your company, and finally to being motivated and inspired to act.
Jeff Freund is a 15+ year veteran of the content industry. He is currently founder and CEO of Akoonu, a strategic marketing platform for B2B enterprise companies. The Akoonu Platform helps marketers deliver high quality buying journeys through a deep understanding of their audience and the production of engaging, buyer-centric content.

Previously, he was a founder of Clickability, the leading SaaS Web Content Management platform, and served as the company’s CTO and CEO.

Throughout his career, Jeff has worked closely with customers to truly understand the needs of marketers and technologists in industries such as High Tech, Financial Services, Media, and Manufacturing. He has been active in the Digital Marketing ecosystem through extensive M&A experience and as a thought leader speaking at conferences and on panels.

Connect with Jeff:  
[www.linkedin.com/in/jefffreund/](http://www.linkedin.com/in/jefffreund/)