

7 Major Benefits Freelance Copywriters Deliver to Content Marketers

How outsourcing to a writing specialist can help you overcome common obstacles to successful content marketing

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Introduction

“What differentiates content marketing from other forms of marketing is its intent to offer valuable information so people want to hear from your business ... so they subscribe to your content because they are interested in it.”

Lisa Murton Beets
Research Director, CMI

When it comes to content marketing, businesses are no longer asking if they should join the bandwagon. Most are already on board and enjoying the benefits to a greater or lesser degree.

Those benefits, when translated into organizational goals, include but are not limited to **brand awareness, lead generation, customer acquisition** and **thought leadership**¹.

In North America, providing useful, relevant information to a targeted audience on a regular basis has become generally accepted practice among most B2B companies.

In 2017, 91% were doing some form of content marketing, ranging from online articles and webinars to email campaigns and white papers².

So, businesses may no longer be wondering if they should do content marketing. But they are asking themselves what's *the best way* to do content marketing.

Why are some companies making such a success of content marketing and others are making such a hash of it?

With that in mind, this white paper outlines:

- ❖ the damaging impact of content marketing done badly
- ❖ the major obstacles to successful content marketing
- ❖ the key strategies adopted by top performers

The paper then shows how outsourcing at least one content marketing activity to a specialist can be a smart move, and it wraps up by listing **seven major benefits of hiring a freelance copywriter**.

¹ 2014 B2B Content Marketing Trends—North America (CMI/MarketingProfs)

² B2B Content Marketing: 2018 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends—North America (CMI/MarketingProfs)

The Damaging Impact of Poor Content Marketing

Over 30% of business decision makers have removed companies from consideration after engaging with what they viewed as poor thought leadership content

How Thought Leadership Impacts B2B Demand Generation: Edelman & LinkedIn

It seems that marketers are still refining their approach to the new kid on the marketing block, and some are clearly better at it than others. Only 20% of companies rate themselves as having a very successful approach to content marketing. Compare that to the 23% who say they are minimally or not at all successful.

The problem with not being very good at content marketing is that you spend a lot of valuable time for very little in return. In other words, do it poorly and you're wasting your team's efforts *and* your marketing budget.

But that's not all. An ill-conceived approach to content marketing can lead to confusion about what your brand represents. If you're not delivering a consistent message through your content, you're baffling your audience at best and alienating them at worst.

These days, most people (84%) rely on brands to produce content. So that's just what the world's leading brands do. Yet these same people assert that 60% of all content created by brands is poor, irrelevant or fails to deliver³.

That's concerning because, if a company doesn't know what kinds of content appeals to its consumers, it's certainly not going to build an audience. It could even end up damaging its brand.

Arguably, the most dramatic impact of poor content management concerns thought leadership. Half of business decision makers spend at least 30 minutes every week consuming thought leadership content, and 41% of C-Suite executives say thought leadership has led them to include a company in a RFP opportunity⁴. Clearly, thought leadership content done right is a worthwhile investment.

But, do it badly and it can backfire. So much so, your company could be dropped from a prospect's shortlist of vendors. In 2017, 45% of business decision makers and 53% of C-suite executives admit to losing respect and admiration for companies producing low-quality or irrelevant thought-leadership content⁵.



³ 2017 Meaningful Brands® study (Havas Group)

⁴ How Thought Leadership Impacts B2B Demand Generation: June 1, 2017 (Edelman & LinkedIn)

⁵ Ibid.

The Major Obstacles to Successful Content Marketing

47% of companies struggle with producing fresh content that engages the reader and fulfils the organization's marketing strategy

CMI/MarketingProfs

So, what is it exactly that is preventing some companies from making a success of content marketing?

Two of the biggest stumbling blocks are **time and resource**: 69% of companies admit to not having enough time and resources to create content. Likewise, 55% of companies can't produce enough content to keep up with their editorial calendar⁶.

Another major barrier is being able to produce fresh content that engages the reader and fulfils the organization's marketing strategy.

It's little wonder that many marketing departments are feeling besieged. Providing a constant supply of engaging, relevant content to consumers is like feeding the insatiable Cookie Monster—it's a never-ending task than can, at times, seem overwhelming.

Since so many companies are laboring with no discernable results, it's worth looking at what companies successful at content marketing are doing. How exactly are they overcoming the problem of providing satisfying content at a constant rate?

Several answers can be found in the latest survey of B2B businesses carried out by the Content Marketing Institute⁷.

Figure 1 compares top performers (i.e. organizations who see their overall content marketing approach as extremely or very successful) with poor performers (i.e. organizations who admit their approach is minimally or not at all successful) by highlighting the content marketing strategies they adopt:

Content Marketing Strategies	Top Performers	Poor Performers
Always/frequently delivers content consistently	75%	33%
Organization very committed to content marketing	89%	27%
Has a documented content marketing strategy	62%	16%
Percentage of total marketing budget for content marketing	40%	14%

Figure 1: Comparison chart of most and least successful B2B content marketers in North America in 2017 (CMI/MarketingProfs)

⁶ B2B Content Marketing: 2014 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends—North America (CMI/MarketingProfs)

⁷ B2B Content Marketing: 2018 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends—North America (CMI/MarketingProfs)

Factors Contributing to Content Marketing Success

Success with content creation begins with higher quality and more efficient workflow

In short, companies who see themselves as successful at content marketing are **committed** to making it work, they have their content marketing strategy **formalized in writing**, and they divert **adequate funds** from their total marketing budget to produce content **frequently and consistently**.

Companies who admit to being poor content marketing performers are—by and large—not implementing these strategies at all or only nominally.

Perhaps they have not yet had time to develop and mature their content marketing approach. Or maybe their leadership teams are not allocating sufficient time for content marketing results to be produced. A common complaint by marketers is that directors pull the plug on projects too soon, not realizing that content marketing is a marathon, not a sprint.

The discrepancy between the top and poor performers can be analyzed further by looking at the factors successful B2B marketers say have helped to improve their content marketing in the last year (see Figure 2).

At the very top of the list is producing better quality content in a more efficient way. That's closely followed by developing or adjusting the organization's content marketing strategy. Other factors cited targeting content distribution, prioritizing content marketing, changing/adding marketing roles, and measuring results.



Figure 2: Strategies used by successful B2B marketers (CMI/MarketingProfs)

Creating an Efficient Content Creation Process

Making content marketing a bigger priority and developing a roadmap are essential to successful content marketing

What makes for an efficient process depends largely on the size of your marketing department and the budget allocated to you. But the following actions would help any company, regardless of size, to improve the flow and quality of its content creation:

- ❖ Documenting production process steps to identify and remove bottlenecks (from generating ideas and drafting through to editing, approval and publishing)
- ❖ Discontinuing ineffective content marketing activities to concentrate on those that yield the best results
- ❖ Outsourcing at least one content marketing activity to specialists (e.g. writers, designers, strategists, analysts)
- ❖ Producing content that is fact-based and/or credible and focusing on creating content for the audience, not the brand
- ❖ Delivering content consistently using a defined schedule, the right formats and the right platforms (LinkedIn, Twitter, etc.)
- ❖ Using digital tools to manage & analyze content marketing efforts
- ❖ Allocating an adequate budget for content marketing

More than half of B2B companies outsource at least one marketing activity⁸, although large B2B companies (i.e. over 1,000 employees) outsource content creation more frequently than small companies⁹.

It's tempting to assume that large companies outsource more simply because they have bigger budgets. But that may not be the only reason.

Interestingly, large companies have more of a problem than small companies in identifying the kind of content that engages their audiences¹⁰. Why is not clear. Maybe there are just too many competing priorities.



⁸ B2B Content Marketing: 2018 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends—North America (CMI/MarketingProfs)

⁹ 2014 B2B Content Marketing Trends—North America (CMI/MarketingProfs)

¹⁰ Ibid.

Outsourcing Content to Specialists

Functions that B2B Marketers Outsource



2014 B2B Content Marketing Trends—North America: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs

Whatever motives companies have for outsourcing, it may come as no surprise that the two most common tasks given to outsiders are writing and design. Coming in at third place is content distribution and syndication, although at less than half the rate of writing.

These activities require knowledge and training that not all marketing departments possess. True, inhouse marketing staff almost certainly have a better understanding of their company's offering. But freelancers and agencies bring specialist skills to the table that enhance not only the production process but also the quality of the content.

What writing projects do companies outsource?

The type of content you can outsource to external writers is almost limitless, but when it comes to content marketing, we're usually talking about:

- ❖ e-newsletters and email campaigns
- ❖ slideware presentations
- ❖ online articles
- ❖ social media posts
- ❖ white papers and research reports
- ❖ case studies

If you're wondering which of these are most effective in achieving specific objectives, the consensus among B2B marketers is—in order of effectiveness—**white papers, e-books, case studies** and **social media posts**¹¹.

Of course, what works for one company may not work so well for another. White papers, for example, are most suitable for sellers of innovative, complex or expensive products and services in industries like health, energy, technology and finance.

Once you've determined which types of content produces the best results for you, it's time to consider if your team can carry on feeding the content beast on its own or if they need a little help from outsiders. The benefits of outsourcing to a professional writer are outlined on the next pages.



¹¹ B2B Content Marketing: 2018 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends—North America (CMI/MarketingProfs)

The 7 Benefits of Outsourcing to a Freelance Copywriter

Fortunately, outsourcing to a freelance copywriter is not an all-or-nothing situation. In fact, only 1% of large companies outsource all their content creation. The vast majority deploy a mix of insourcing and outsourcing¹².

Outsourcing for the first time can involve a certain amount of trepidation. Will the freelancer understand enough about your product? Can he or she adopt your brand's style and tone of voice? Will they deliver the draft on time?

The best advice is to start small. Dip your toes in first by assigning a well-defined, one-off project to get a feel for the freelancer's writing skills and—just as importantly—how you work together.

That being said, let's look at seven substantial benefits of hiring freelance copywriter.

1. Access to specialist writing skills

Even if you have a full-time marketing department, you may not have the bandwidth to deal with all your company's content creation needs. Your marketing team may be adept at producing regular marketing content like e-newsletters and social media posts, but it may lack the knowledge or experience to produce the range of content that fills a marketing manager's editorial calendar.

Many freelance copywriters specialize in certain types of content and/or industries: one may focus on blog posts and articles for the travel industry, one on case studies and white papers for the logistics industry, and yet another on email marketing campaigns and associated landing pages for B2C companies.

Bear in mind also that some copywriters have related skills such as keyword research, design and voice-over talent. That can be a real bonus if you want to ensure your website content meets SEO best practices or you want to repurpose your article into an infographic or video.

Having a small network of freelance copywriters to supplement your in-house marketing skills helps you stick to your editorial schedule and produce content that achieves your marketing objectives.

¹² 2014 B2B Content Marketing Trends—North America (CMI/MarketingProfs)

2. Control over your headcount and payroll costs

A senior corporate copywriter can earn between \$91,000 and \$147,000 a year¹³. Add to that employers' costs of between 25-40%, and you're talking about a total employment cost of between \$113,750 and \$205,800 for a talented copywriter¹⁴. That can put a real dent in your marketing budget.

Of course, every talented copywriter is worth their weight in ROI, but if you need specialized writing skills only a few times a year, it makes financial sense to buy in those skills on an ad hoc basis.

Even if you plan to use a freelancer on a regular basis for, say, writing blog posts, the higher hourly rate won't outweigh the savings on employee benefits like health insurance, unemployment compensation insurance and pension contributions.

3. No commitment to additional work

One of the great advantages of hiring a freelance writer is that there's no commitment beyond the agreement you sign at the start of the copywriting project. Once the project is complete, you're not obliged to hire the writer until you have another suitable project.

It also leaves you free to try another copywriter who has a different skill set or a better understanding of your products and services. Either way, you're under no obligation to hire the writer again.

Naturally, the reverse is true: the freelance copywriter is never under any obligation to carry out further projects with you. But (and this can be said this with absolute certainty) *all copywriters yearn for long-term relationship with good clients*. It makes life so much easier for both parties.

So, if you find a copywriter who gets your company, its products and its marketing message, he or she is worth hanging onto.

4. Flexible financing and no agency mark-up

Unlike employees, freelancers work on demand, so the cost of hiring them is variable. If you're in danger of overspending your marketing budget as you approach year end, or you suddenly need to tighten your belt because of an unexpected fall in sales, you can simply defer the next writing project until the company can afford it.

The flexibility to dial up or down the number of writing projects you outsource on a month-to-month basis is a great attraction to budget managers, although bear in mind that many copywriters ask for a retainer or a contracted minimum number of assignments if their work demands a lot of research upfront.

If you decide to hire a freelancer directly, rather than through a marketing agency, you'll also save on costs because there will be no agency mark up.

¹³ 'Copywriters Salary Data', compiled by Neville Medhora of KopywritingCourse

¹⁴ Michelle Edwards, CPA, owner of Trailhead Accounting Solutions CPA, LLC

5. Consistent quality performance

No matter what profession they're in, all freelancers depend on repeat work and loyal customers. Knowing a steady stream of income is entirely dependent on a constant output of quality tends to focus the mind and sharpen the pencil of freelance copywriters.

They know how important it is to maintain good relationships with clients and deliver quality work on time each and every every time. After all, the next project is never guaranteed.

6. Writing projects on the back-burner can be cleared

Does your marketing team have a few writing projects they just never get around to doing? Most companies have a long content marketing wish-list, which means side-lining 'less important' marketing projects like:

- ❖ case studies of customer success stories
- ❖ white papers on industry issues
- ❖ informational web pages that describe a product or service
- ❖ longer in-depth articles for your blog
- ❖ PowerPoint presentations for the CEO or CFO

Hiring a freelancer is a great way to clear those writing projects that have been left on the back-burner.

Freelancer copywriters are used to working with a wide range of different companies, so they're a pretty adaptable bunch. Beyond the initial company introduction and the project briefings, you won't have to hand-hold a freelancer on every job. In short, they really can make your lives easier by helping you out during peak workloads or simply clearing your backlog.

7. Can generate content ideas for you

It can be tough for a marketing department to generate a constant stream of content ideas, especially when they have several competing projects on the go. In larger companies particularly, a lack of buy-in or a disconnect with consumers among junior staff can occur, and that can stifle creativity and vision.

Freelance copywriters, on the other hand, are not constrained by office politics or want of time. They can focus on the job in hand—producing fact-based, credible content. What's more, they can suggest topics and formats that will keep your audience engaged and the creation process in flow.

Collaborating with marketers, designers and other creatives is something experienced copywriters are also used to. They are usually very open to sharing ideas with other project team members, so it's worth viewing a hired writer as a valuable resource that goes beyond 'just writing'. Having an outsider's perspective of your company's offering and marketing strategy can be extremely illuminating and useful.

Conclusions

Hiring a freelancer copywriter is a great way to clear those writing projects that have been left on the marketing back-burner

Most B2B companies readily accept the advantages of content marketing. But a significant proportion are struggling to produce quality content on a regular basis and in an efficient way, and that can have a negative impact on the company's brand and its ability to generate leads.

Enhancing the efficiency of your content creation processes and delivering quality content in the right format and through the right channel for your target audience is vital to successful content marketing.

Among other things, a company's marketing department should consider **building a small network of freelance copywriters** that can take on certain content creation activities, especially when it comes to carriers of **thought-leadership content** such as white papers and well-researched articles.

About Helen McCrone and Write for Business

Helen McCrone is a freelance copywriter specializing in white papers & B2B content. Trading under the name Write for Business, she connects businesses with prospects and customers by creating content that's relevant, honest & well-written.

She knows the importance of targeting a specific audience, and using a clear, engaging writing style that appeals to business readers and search engines alike.

Her services include white papers, article-based blog posts, case studies, website content, marketing emails and brochures. She works with large and mid-sized companies in a range of industries, from logistics and finance & accounting to engineering, technology and training & recruitment.

To find out more about how Helen McCrone can help you overcome your content marketing challenges, visit www.write-for-business.com, or call her on 360-525-8277.