

Content Strategy Basics




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Content Strategy Basics

Content strategy focuses on the planning, creation, delivery, and governance of content. Content not only includes the words on the page but also the images and multimedia that are used. Ensuring that you have useful and usable content, that is well structured, and easily found is vital to improving the user experience of a website.

Creating a Comprehensive Strategy and Governance

The goal of content strategy is to create meaningful, cohesive, engaging, and sustainable content. Throughout her book, *Content Strategy for the Web*, Kristina Halvorson discusses in detail the benefits of and how to create your content strategy. It reiterates that your strategy helps you to identify what already exists, what should be created and, more importantly, why it should be created.

Brain Traffic has created the  [Content Strategy Quad ©](#) to help describe the content-oriented and people-oriented components you need to know. We have adapted it a bit to discuss the components that come together to help you create a successful strategy and governance.

Content-oriented Components	People-oriented Components
Identify Goals and Substance: focuses on what content is required to successfully execute your core strategy. It includes characteristics such as messaging architecture, intended audience(s), and voice and tone.	Outline the Roles and Workflow: focuses on how people manage and maintain content on a daily basis, including the roles, tasks, and tools required throughout the content lifecycle.
Determine Structure: focuses on how content is prioritized, organized, and accessed. Focuses on the content itself, including mapping messages to content, content bridging, and creating detailed page tables.	Identify Policies and Standards: focuses on the policies, standards, and guidelines that apply to content and its lifecycle, as well as how an organization will sustain and evolve its content strategy.

Content Lifecycle

Producing compelling and sustainable content means that you need to understand and follow the content lifecycle. Erin Scime identifies that there are five stages in the lifecycle. In general, content lifecycles include the following:

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- **Audit and Analysis:** Content stakeholder [interviews](#), competitive analysis, objective analysis and evaluation of the content environment (site, partner content, sister, parent sites)
- **Strategy:** Determine topical ownership areas, taxonomy, process/workflow for content production, sourcing plan, voice and brand definition
- **Plan:** [Staffing recommendations](#), content management system customization, metadata plan, communications plan, migration plan
- **Create:** [Writing content](#), asset production, governance model, search engine optimization, quality assurance
- **Maintain:** Plan for periodic auditing, advise the client, determine targets for success measures.

Several of the deliverables related to each of those phases overlap with the deliverables of other fields, including [information architecture](#), [user research](#), [project management](#), [web analytics](#). Instead of thinking of who owns each deliverable, it's important to think of who contributes to each and how those different contributions come together to define the final product. There's value in including multiple perspectives on deliverables.

Best Practices for Creating Meaningful Content

We have identified these best practices to help you create meaningful and relevant content. Each piece of content should:

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- **Reflect your organization's goals and user's needs.** You can discover your user's needs through conducting market research, [user research](#), and [analyzing web metrics](#).
- **Understand how user's think and speak about a subject.** Content should then be created and structured based on that. Doing this will also help you with search engine optimization (SEO).
- **Communicate to people in a way that they understand.** [Embracing plain writing principles](#) helps with this.
- **Be useful.** By being purposeful in the content that you include, omit the needless.
- **Stay up-to-date and and remain factual.** When new information becomes available, update your content or archive it.
- **Be [accessible](#) to all people.** You have a responsibility to make sure that all people can access and benefit from your information.
- **Be consistent.** Following style guides, both for language and design, helps people understand and learn what you are trying to communicate.
- **Be able to be found.** Make sure that users can find your content both through internally through [navigation](#) and also externally through search engines.
- **Help define the [requirements](#) for the overall site.** Content should drive design, structure, etc

References