The Changing Face of Business Content

Business content connects internal and external customers to information. It explains the features of your product to potential buyers. It helps users know you understand them and that you’ve designed your product to meet their needs. It distinguishes your product from others, and it has the power to persuade. Done well, your content can strengthen your company, drive sales, bring down costs, and build brand loyalty for repeat purchases.

What does "business content, done well" look like, exactly? Tech and culture have changed over the last decades, and the bar for excellent business content has changed right along with them.

What’s the same:

- The aim. Customers need to know how products work and if those products or services will meet their needs. They’re looking to you (or they could be) for that information. The way they get that information might not look like the instruction manuals and TV ads of yesteryear, but it’s still essential to convey.
- The execution. A good idea is worth much, much more when it actually works. You need to get the details right, find stakeholder buy-in, and follow through to ensure your content’s resonating in the ways you hoped; none of that has changed, and we don’t think it ever will.

What’s new:

- The flow. Information flows quickly, freely, and socially. Thanks to the democratizing effects of today’s high-speed, mobile, social web, consumer information is now more immediate, personal, and shareable. Customers expect to engage with information from the businesses and products they depend on in the same easily accessible way. Gone are the days of the door-stop-sized user manual supplied at sale. Video reigns supreme. The podcast has reinvigorated audio. And it doesn’t stop there.
• The feel. Customers are accustomed to richer, immersive media experiences, and they expect the same rich experience from the brands they interact with. Today’s successful business content takes advantage of the sensory-rich, multimedia capacities of our modern digital age.

• The timing. What used to be categorized as after-purchase content now must serve and delight customers using your product on a trial or month-to-month basis, thanks to today’s cloud-based SaaS and freemium products. Your customer might not renew next month; they might never click "buy" at all, but your content must be good enough to woo them into staying on your app or platform for a little while longer.

Here’s what content looks like today:

Cross-functional

Great content seamlessly integrates yesterday’s siloed content types. Take technical documentation and marketing, for example. What better way to sell customers on a continuing subscription or an upgrade to a paid plan than to design and deliver phenomenal, in-context, on-brand support docs that help them use the product to its fullest? That’s starting to sound an awful lot like marketing. Even API documentation with code samples can (and arguably should) be aligned with the brand.

Contextual

Provide your customers with content right when and where they need it, and they’ll reward you with their business and brand loyalty. Ideally, as customers move through your website, app, platform, or purchase experience, they feel as though you’ve anticipated their needs. They feel welcomed and valued, and, over time, they feel confident as users and engaged with your brand.
Design-fluent

Sharp, thoughtful design gets your content noticed and used. Code documentation follows the company’s style guide; online help libraries are built with UX in mind. And the visual expectations for marketing have risen, too.

Design impacts what you offer in the first place. Aim to produce content without any expectation of an audience in perfect health or peak ability. Search engines privilege accessible sites over less-accessible sites, too. How easy is it to move through your marketing campaign landing page without using a mouse? How about with a screen reader?

Adaptive

Modern content is experiential and dynamic. It changes when you give it input, and you get content in a format that works for your screen. You don’t just read something; you select a few options to get a personalized dashboard, use a VR headset to explore a branded story, or take a quiz. Code documentation includes sample apps. Support content guesses what you might want to see next. Copy is shareable to Twitter and Facebook with one click. Webinars are live, answering your questions in real time.

Multimedia

Do your white papers include graphics? How much video is on your site? Millennials, and the generation following them even more so, spend their days immersed in content rich with movement and sound. To grab their attention, modern content must move beyond text.

Measurable

Because business content now lives predominantly in the digital realm, its performance is measurable in a way it’s never been before. You can see what customers reach for most often, where they linger, what they can’t seem to find via search. All of this data provides a feedback loop that guides smarter, more responsive business decisions. You’re no longer flying blind.
You may already have taken your first steps to modernize your business content, but we’re excited to take you to the next level of your mission-critical journey and help you maximize your return on business content investment. In the meantime, may your content work be gratifying, effective, and fun!

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