

BEYOND BLOGGING:
HOW
BRAND PUBLISHING
CAN TRANSFORM YOUR
COMPANY'S DIGITAL MARKETING
RESULTS



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ABSTRACT

The goal of becoming a brand publisher is to be a valuable and trusted resource for potential customers looking for more information. But how do you become more than just one in a hundred companies with a blog and actually establish your brand's voice as a leader in the industry?

In this white paper, we will lay out a clear and coherent vision of what brand publishing is, what it isn't, and why brands of all shapes and sizes stand to benefit from its proper execution. In the pages to come, we'll also explore best practices for executing a brand publishing program, and provide guidance on how to turn digital content into meaningful traffic and sales conversations.

WHY COMPANIES STARTED BLOGGING IN THE FIRST PLACE

The difference between a brand publication and a blog may be a subtle one to the reader, but in reality they constitute two fundamentally different philosophies and approaches to the production of content.

A blog is often treated by marketers as a relatively informal or casual project composed of hot takes, “snackable” short pieces, and other cures for office boredom. And the rest of the company in turn tends to treat it the same way. It’s a non-essential marketing channel that is usually owned and operated by a smaller department or an enthusiastic employee on the fringes of the company, or it might align with the resident company HiPPO (Highest Paid Person’s Opinion).

That is not to say that a blog doesn’t enjoy some prominence within the organization. A blog can often be treated as a vehicle for internal affairs, a company’s connection to existing customers, or the primary channel for PR. Corporate crisis management can often be best managed on a blog.

Nonetheless, there is a certain informality to blogging that was baked into the very design of the first web

publishing platforms. Blogs were the first incarnation of social media, and their rise as both a writing format and a digital medium was precipitated by individuals who realized that they could break news and publish their own opinions -- rather than wait for a journalist to cover their story -- while discovering communities of like-minded people in the process.

Blog comments and the ability they allowed any reader to reach the author also represented a major step forward for the social web. Suddenly, websites didn't have to be "brochureware" (software that reproduces a brochure-like experience online), but could instead move beyond a static homepage and connect readers and writers through a *social experience*.

Before blog comments, websites simply weren't built for engagement and connection. The only way someone could interact with a website was by emailing the owner, submitting a question via the site's web form (basically just an email), or by leaving a message in the site's "guest book."

In short, digital interaction was fundamentally a read-only activity. But as the web evolved, new server-side technologies and faster internet connections prompted the mid-2000s rise of both "Web 2.0" as a concept and the emerging trend towards "user generated content." Among other technical factors, this new era of "The Web" brought with it new types of media platforms that were characterized by users' ability to not only access information and content, but create it as well.

Web 2.0 became known as the "read/write web," and blogs were the first platforms to emerge within its ecosystem. Though Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter have come to permeate every aspect of our lives, it was the early blogging platforms, web forums, and search engines that gave users and developers alike the first taste of what was possible on the internet.



THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF PUBLISHING

As web users became increasingly empowered as content creators, the traditional publishing industry's business model was thrown into chaos. The barriers to becoming a publisher and reaching large audiences had vanished.

Web users first became bloggers and then social media users, and their expectations for media dramatically shifted in kind. Not only were they free to create their own content, but individuals and groups could create their own publications focused on special interests and fueled by little more than passion. Where once there had been journalistic principles and an aura of truth around gold standard publications like the New York Times, there were now thousands of Breitbarts and Huffington Posts. The internet forged an infinite number of opinions with an infinite number of echo chambers.

In the business world, the trade press experienced similar upheaval. The incorrect perception that the internet offered limited opportunities for revenue growth didn't help matters, as many trade publications proved less than enthusiastic about embracing digital -- even in 2016, some still cling to print-first business models.

As many of these trade publications have consolidated and folded, successful businesses -- like the web users of earlier days -- have seized the opportunity offered by the combination of low barriers to entry and a floundering trade press to become valued sources of industry knowledge in their own right.

CHALLENGES TO FILLING THE TRADE PUBLICATION VOID

As companies themselves -- and not the trade press -- have emerged as primary sources of our news and information, one essential challenge facing the “business press” is to preserve the sense of membership the trade publication once provided.

Before information and content was “free” online, the trade press united members of their respective industries in a national discussion that reflected those industries’ interests and addressed their challenges. The success of those trade publications depended on the underlying strength and solidarity of the real, human, social network formed amongst the audience that read them; subscribing to a trade publication was a true act of membership.

Association with these professional orders was also a symbol of status. And most of the original and longest-standing trade publications were founded on a more explicit form of membership than was required of a subscriber to any popular magazine. Eligibility was key here: to join the database of subscribers to a particular trade publication, a reader needed to meet certain industry standards and qualifications. You

couldn't accidentally subscribe to a magazine aimed specifically at dentists or pick up a copy at the grocery store.

The most successful industries -- such as legal, finance, and accountancy -- still all require some type of qualification to participate at this higher level of communication and conversation. Science, medical, and IT. Insurance and actuaries. You name the industry and there is a professional barrier to entry -- and that career background is required over and above any traditional academic qualifications.

Many of the original business publications centered on topics that emerged from the sphere of professional accreditation. While these professional qualifications represented career achievements for the average person, obtaining them also represented a key moment of inculcation into the professional circles that empowered those individuals for the remainder of their working lives. In being accredited, you were now awarded entry into the established social circles of your industry and privy to certain insider-only discussions.

All in all, membership was a big deal to attain and, in attaining it, one became part of a professional community that granted you a certain status. To receive the publication *Accountancy Age*, you had to be ACCA qualified. To get *Legal Week*, you had to pass the bar exam. To be offered a subscription to *Computing Magazine*, you had to be a member of the British Computer Society or an equivalent IT accreditation organization.

People who qualified were offered "free" industry magazines and newspapers that would publish job openings and relevant industry news on what was known as a "closed circulation" or "controlled circulation" subscriber model. Closed circulation publications could thrive because they had a well-defined audience that universally shared a specific level of expertise in a specific area.

In effect, that well-defined audience created a marketplace to reach those skillsets, and closed circulation publications thrived on a free-to-read type model because they were the best and only way for advertisers to reach those audiences. Their revenue came from both vertical-specific classifieds and ads taken out by product and services companies catering to those industries.

Driven by this ad-supported model and centered on business-to-business (B2B) conversations, the news value of these offline publications was also readily apparent. Periodicals could present themselves as both an independent voice in their community and, simultaneously, a representative voice of the industry at large in the wider world of mainstream media.

Where relevant, national broadsheets and tabloids could look to these B2B publications for commentary on topics outside their respective realms of expertise. In turn, this gave rise to both the widespread practice of a purer form of journalism within the B2B community and a subsector of PR outfits catering specifically to these types of businesses. These PR companies were the ones who first encouraged and implemented

thought leadership as a form of peer-to-peer communication across all professional industries.

It's important to understand that an act of membership serves as the key to access for most successful publishing business models. That act of membership and inculcation is a crucial moment in which the publisher can define their ideal reader and then later leverage that definition for the purposes of business and industry growth.



THE ONLINE PUBLICATION MODEL: MEMBERSHIP STILL REQUIRED, BUT WITH LOWER BARRIERS TO ENTRY

Extrapolating the idea of membership to non-trade publications is simple. The cover price of a magazine or a newspaper is always low because the act of buying it is a token gesture of exclusivity that can be traded upon.

The audience's demonstration of some intention to read (by buying) earns them membership status and functions as the criteria for advertisers to consider them "an audience." Prior to digital media, magazines had to have their circulation figures audited to win the attention of advertisers. It remains true that any successful publication's revenue model is born out of its audience circulation figures.

So, ultimately the goal of a traditional magazine is for you to become a paid subscriber or regular buyer. Once you become a subscriber, you have registered all kinds of important data with the business, such as your name, address, and phone number. From that information, the business can extrapolate all kinds of key demographic data about you and other readers and bundle it into a completely packaged audience. In turn, advertisers can pay to access and market their products or services to that bundled audience segment.

Nonetheless, what we have described is still very much an offline community, enjoined and connected by offline products. The subsequent rise of digital media has supplanted the traditional business models of the publishing industry and replaced it with blogs, social networks, and search engines. The brand publication has been irrevocably born.

The fundamental difference that [Longneck & Thunderfoot \(L&T Co.\)](#) perceives between the offline publication model and the online publication model is the redefinition of this concept of membership. Where the cover charge or business qualification was the entry point into the community of the offline world, in an online world, every entry point into your digital content could be considered a moment of membership -- and that moment of membership is an opportunity to deepen both your connection with your audience, and the data you generate about that audience.

High-quality brand publications seek to educate their target audience and, in many cases, make them better at their jobs. They are responsive to industry trends and forge deeper relationships with audiences by acting on the implicit data they provide (e.g. commissioning new articles based on the most popular content on your site as measured by social shares or new search keyword data).

The business value of providing this information and establishing these deeper relationships is direct, transparent, and clear. The first party data collected can be leveraged immediately for the purposes of audience segmentation, retargeting, and lead generation. White papers and how-to guides can be accessed in exchange for contact data. Tickets can be sold to meetups and events. And most importantly, new business can be generated without the cost of previously indispensable advertising middlemen.

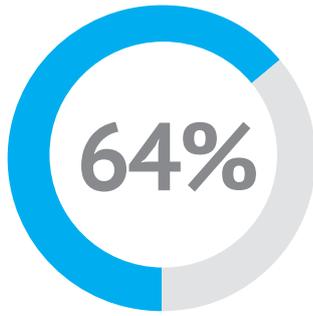
BECOMING AN AUTHORITATIVE VOICE IN YOUR INDUSTRY: HOW TO BE A SOURCE OF ANSWERS AND EXPERTISE



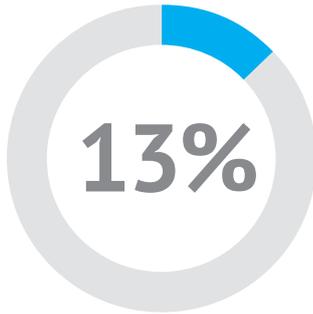
The goal of becoming a brand publisher is to be a valuable and trusted resource for potential customers looking for information.

To begin tackling this goal, brands should first and foremost strive to conceive of the term, “information,” as broadly as possible. Content should address common questions posed by clients and customers, regardless of whether or not your products or services directly address those concerns. From there, a brand publication must identify the foremost experts and creative thinkers within the company and get their knowledge down on paper (or rather, onto a word processor or CMS).

But that’s presumably what every brand is doing these days. How do you become more than just one in a hundred company blogs and actually start performing like a leader in your industry?



PERCENT OF CUSTOMERS SAY A **BRAND'S VALUES ARE IMPORTANT**



SAY THE SAME OF FREQUENCY OF INTERACTIONS

Like so many aspects of marketing, branding is vital. A brand publication has its own unique characteristics and appearance, clearly associated with your company's established brand while at the same time setting itself apart. This is especially key to establishing trust with a reader: an individual brand gives the reader a sense of your independence, meaning he or she is more likely to think of you as a source of interesting ideas and not just as a marketing outlet.

The distinction between a blog and a brand publication is a big one, and you should be doing everything you can to ensure that your work belongs in the latter category. As a starting point, ask (and answer) a few relevant questions about your content's home:

WHAT DO WE CALL IT?

If it simply shares the name of the company or an executive, it's a blog, while a distinct name implies a standalone publication. Further to this point, rather than just calling your blog, "Blog" and putting it into a /blog/ folder (e.g. landt.co/blog), consider using the publication name as the folder (e.g. landt.co/digital-strategist). Alternatively, you can host your content on a entirely separate, new domain or subdomain (e.g. strategist.landt.co, thedigitalstrategist.com)

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

Does it look exactly like the rest of your website? Do services pages and articles closely resemble one another? If the answer to both questions is yes, you're running a company blog. A brand publication *looks* like a publication: specifically, it features multiple authors (ranging in rank and job function) and multiple

types of articles (ranging from longform opinion pieces to listicles). To be clear, you can advertise your products and services within the publication. But do try to avoid making every article just about your product and what it does. At the end of the day, people don't want to read ads.

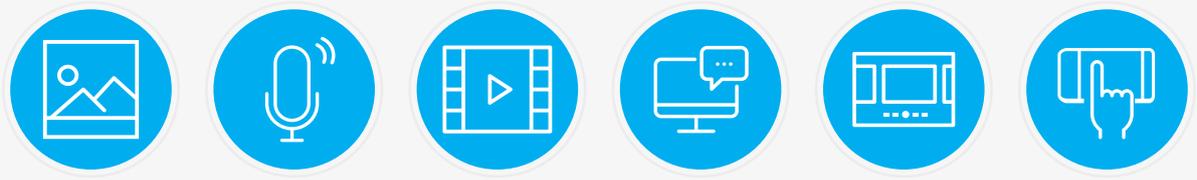
HOW FREQUENTLY DO WE PUBLISH?

If you publish posts on a whim without any concern for timing or cadence, you're running a blog. However, if you map your content to a calendar and follow it, it shows that your brand publication is acting like a publication.

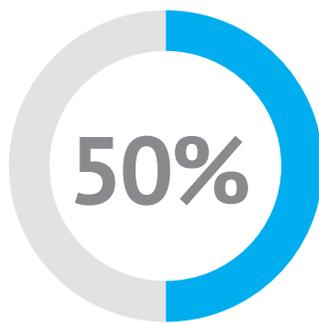
HOW FREQUENTLY DO WE PUBLISH?

A blog collates the voices and perspectives of multiple individuals within a company, even if some are ill-informed and poorly conveyed. A brand publication takes the very best that each of these individuals has to offer in terms of expertise and style and establishes authoritative guidelines that dictate the ideation, narration, and substance of every article.

You cannot stand out in your industry with a repetitive blog that covers played-out subjects, or one that uses lousy prose to convey unclear arguments. It's worth developing a strong procedural framework for the creation and editing of blog posts -- a set routine and cadence is important to build and maintain momentum in the initial stages. Otherwise, the tendency to be disheartened by initial results can morph into a true roadblock to progress. Content marketing is a long-term growth strategy that continually builds success around a body of work, so expect to dedicate at least three to six months to experimenting and determining best practices to capture the attention of your prospects



CREATING DIVERSE CONTENT



50% OF EXECUTIVES SEEK ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AFTER SPOTTING A PRODUCT OR SERVICE IN A VIDEO

Once you've established the form of your written content, start expanding beyond the blog.

Great brand publications produce content that plays well with the platforms that today's consumers spend time on. So it's always worth considering all the ways in which you can actively engage and educate your reader in accordance with different learning styles and habits of consumption. For example, some of your prospects might enjoy their freest moments in the car on their way to work.



While not exactly new, images can be instantly evocative and most quickly capture the reader's attention. The old adage that a picture is worth a thousand words has never rang more true, as more photos have been taken in the last two years than in the previous 200.

Photos communicate the impact of your work on the real world. We're all aware of the power of photojournalism to sway public opinion, but even the most amateurish snaps of a local meetup or conference convey an extraordinarily powerful message: your business is out there in the public sphere, sharing information and connecting with real people.



Podcasts are unique in their dominance of millions of people's spare time, filling the background on long car trips, subway rides, and chore-filled Sunday afternoons. While this might not seem like the most efficient way to attract an audience segment that's ready to purchase, the podcast format allows you to capture a base of engaged subscribers who in turn become true brand ambassadors. As with all content types, the podcasts must be useful and interesting in order to attract loyal listeners.



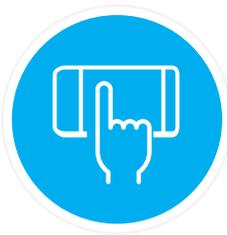
Videos have emerged as some of the most prized pieces of content on the web. More so than audio and the written word, videos have the potential to go viral in a matter of minutes.



Webinars offer you the chance to really showcase your thought leadership by speaking at length about a subject that's generating a lot of interest in your industry. Feature a single speaker or a panel, and encourage engagement from participants by holding a Q&A afterwards.



Slideshares are a great way to convey a lot of information in interesting, engaging ways, much like a white paper or ebook, but with many more graphics and visuals. Be sure to consider what you're using it for: if your idea can be expressed through a series of bullet points and infographics, you've got the right content form. If your content requires a narrative or doesn't involve too many visual elements, slideshares might not be the best choice.



Premium Content (e.g. white papers, ebooks, and infographics) opens the door for deeper consideration of complex topics in your space, while also offering a platform for enticing, insightful, and highly shareable graphic representations of the expertise and data you bring to bear. When paired with landing pages and Adwords or LinkedIn campaigns, downloadable content can be a potent source of new leads for B2B companies in particular.

Virtual reality (VR) will find its way onto this list before we know it. But in the meantime, just remember the importance of experimenting with as many different forms of media as possible: these days, your readers need more ways to connect with your brand's mission and purpose than prose alone can offer.

Yet it doesn't have to be complicated! Keep in mind that you always have the option of spinning one piece of content out into multiple forms -- an ebook might also serve as a slideshare, for instance, and a webinar might also serve as an effective piece of video content. If you do repurpose your work, delay the release of each content type so that you can maximize the impact of a single idea by earning a second or third quick win later on.



IDENTIFYING EXPERTS

As we mentioned earlier, brand publishing takes company blogging to new heights by adopting a “reader-centric” approach first established by traditional periodicals and publications.

To put this concept into action, start with a clear-cut idea of who you want to visit your website, and then construct content that those people would like to read. The brand publication and the user data it generates can be used first to build and segment an audience, and then to launch subsequent marketing activity.

Adopting a customer- or reader-first approach to publishing often dictates that editorial teams address a series of trending topics with a unified, authoritative, and professional voice. In a true brand publication, a business builds its brand by telling stories that relevant audiences are interested in listening to, reading, engaging with, and ultimately buying.

But how do you develop that brand voice? The first step is to identify the personalities, perspectives, and expertise that make your company unique. Before writing your first article, sit down with anyone planning to contribute to the publication and build out authoritative brand guidelines, which should define a clear “house style” and plainly outline the products, services, and/or strategies that your organization is in a unique position to offer. In other words, what’s your company’s value proposition? If the answer is not readily apparent, you’re not ready to start writing.



IDENTIFYING SUBJECTS

The next step is to uncover exactly what you want to say with that voice -- not just today, but every day, week, or month in the future, depending on your publishing schedule. That requires a strategy for regularly surfacing buzzworthy stories in your industry and then developing unique takes on them. In other words, stake out your position on the issues your audience cares about.

It's a more complex task than simply checking trending topics on social media sites like Twitter, Facebook, and Reddit. It's not enough to just write on relevant topics -- your brand needs to have a legitimate stake in the topic at hand. Readers tend to be skeptical of brands trying to weigh in on a subject that has little to do with them, so it's important that you stick to what you know. That may mean going above and beyond the typical news crawl by developing a social listening strategy.

Social listening can be performed on any variety of tools: through robust paid platforms like BuzzSumo, or simply by setting up Google alerts for the terms most relevant to your business. Certainly, the stories you choose can be informed by your SEO strategy and focus on keywords you want to rank well for on search engines, but that can't be the only consideration driving your content strategy. You should be dedicating time and effort to blending your content's objectives with your social media and search engine marketing goals, as well as with the subjects in which your audience shows genuine interest.

Proprietary data is another key resource to draw on when you're looking to uncover what your audience cares about. Interest and intention data pulled from various marketing channels can reveal the specific

topics that consumers consider ancillary to their interest in your brand.

And just like when you buy media placements in publishers associated with your specific audience, it's important that you think beyond the scope of your own industry. But instead of borrowing space from those publications, you should borrow their subject matter.

For instance, if you sell garden care products, it's likely that your consumers are interested in curating not just what's outside their home, but inside it as well. Specifically, there might be a high-spending audience segment that's particularly interested in real estate. Of course, you should generally stick to your expertise, but it's always helpful to pull from other disciplines to add variety and relevance to your content.

While listening to the market is key to developing new story ideas, it makes little sense to waste the creativity that's already at work in your office. You may not realize it, but you're already sitting next to a team of thought leaders! So be sure to source content ideas from your own colleagues and ask for their opinions on a regular basis -- you can let them develop their own ideas, or host brainstorming sessions where team members collaborate to create exciting concepts and story angles. In any case, readers respect a publication that drives new and thought-provoking conversations, rather than one that just chases the same old memes.



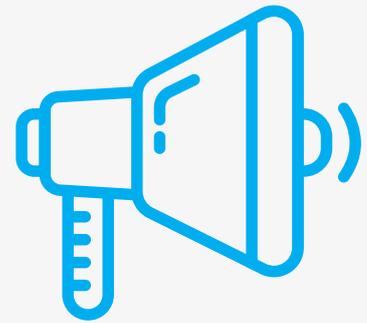
EDITING

Even if you've got talented writers producing top-notch, creative stories, you can't expect them to publish that work completely on their own. It's an inherent fact of publishing that they'll need a second or third pair of eyes to review their work for the purposes of restating any unclear ideas, updating outdated information, or catching any grammatical mistakes and typos that might have slipped through.

To put this plan into action, establish an agreed-upon system in advance so that employees know what needs to be edited, who needs to edit it, and when it needs to be published. Doing so helps generate a shared voice and sense of ownership for the content that populates your brand publication, which in turn generates organizational momentum to explore the next topic and empowers your internal experts to keep expressing their best ideas to the market and share your message on social media.

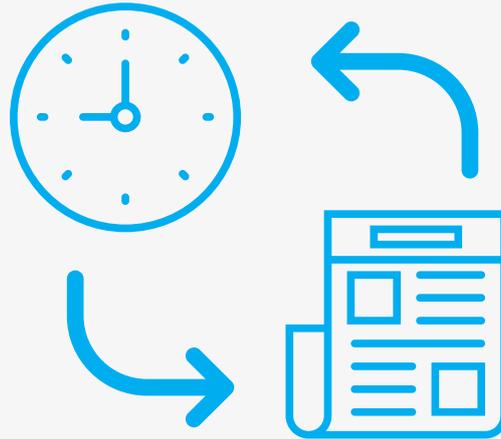
As you may have realized by now, just figuring out what your company wants to say and how it wants to say it requires a lot of work. That's why many organizations opt to collaborate with third-party vendors like L&T that specialize in publishing at scale, as they have the ability to create a dedicated brand newsroom and offer customly-built editorial teams of marketing strategists, journalists, and writers to develop the voice, tone, and substance that best conveys your brand's value proposition.

GROWING YOUR AUDIENCE: HOW TO LEVERAGE CONTENT STRATEGICALLY ACROSS ALL RELEVANT CHANNELS



Just because you build it, that doesn't necessarily mean they'll come -- which is to say that once you've created a publication and have started posting content, you still need to promote it. Everything about your publication, from the variety of article types featured to its publishing cadence to its social presence, must be strategically coordinated so that both individual articles and the entire publication will grab your readers' attention.

— BRANDS THAT POST —
15 ARTICLES MONTHLY
AVERAGE 1,200
NEW LEADS EVERY MONTH



PUBLISHING CADENCE

Every news source is updated according to a predetermined schedule: that schedule is referred to as a publishing cadence. Whether it's daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, or even annually, all publications have to decide how often they'll post fresh content. The more frequently a company publishes, the more likely its readers are going to keep coming back for more; at the same time, a faster publishing cadence equates to more work and a shallower pool of new developments to write about.

In a brand publication, quarterly or annual publishing will increase the time to generate a return on the investment from your content strategy. Unless you're putting together a team of heavy hitters to produce in-depth, investigative, and/or longform pieces (think *The Intercept* or *Foreign Affairs*), readers are going to forget about your publication if you wait that long to send out new material. And from a marketing standpoint, it generally makes more sense to publish longform pieces as white papers, and then to lock the content behind a registration page so that you can collect useful leads and audience data for your business.

Daily publishing requires a good deal of focus and effort, but offers numerous advantages over monthly and weekly publishing. For one, the pressure being placed on every individual post is greatly reduced: not every piece you write has to "go viral" as long as you manage to say something interesting every day. Frequent publishers also tend to see their audiences grow faster, which means that when you do break a solid story, it's more likely to get shared on a meaningful scale.

At L&T, we often say that the best content strategists take dozens of swings at the plate before they knock one out of the park. And you can take our word for it -- we've seen single articles generate more visits in two days than two years of publishing did.

Furthermore, a huge part of what makes a brand publication so valuable is the library of content (read: body of work) that you continually build over time. To that end, create and establish journalistic "beats" that follow developing stories and you'll generate more long-term value for your search rankings and social profiles -- in other words, more traffic and more followers. Building that library of resources should be a primary goal of your content strategy: publishing once every other week won't do that at a cost-efficient rate.

By contrast, brands that post 15 articles per month average 1,200 new leads per month, according to [HubSpot](#). Naturally, not every organization will have the time or money to publish every business day. However, publishing any less frequently than biweekly isn't going to offer serious returns unless you already have either a large, existing social audience and email database or the ad budget to pay for promotion.

**PULL IDEAS FROM
BOTH INTERNAL AND
EXTERNAL RESOURCES**

**PULL IDEAS FROM
BOTH INTERNAL AND
EXTERNAL RESOURCES**

**PUBLISH AS
FREQUENTLY AND
CONSISTENTLY AS YOUR
BUDGET ALLOWS**

**ADD AN EDITORIAL LAYER
TO YOUR WORKFLOW**

**CREATE A DIVERSE ARRAY
OF CONTENT TYPES**



ARTICLE TYPES

Variety is key to any publication's appeal -- not just in terms of topics covered, but also in the types of article commissioned and published. Some of these types are more informal than others, and not all of them will jibe well with every brand voice. A listicle, for instance, may be seen as too casual by readers expecting professional content directed at a professional audience. For many brands, however, the ability to speak to the layperson is a key aspect of customer engagement, and they'll want to emphasize more informal, accessible content.

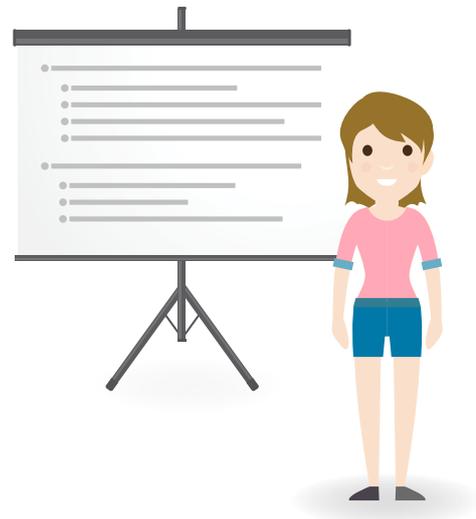
How-Tos are simple, step-by-step descriptions of how to complete certain processes or activities -- usually ones that are simple enough to fully explain and contextualize in a blog-length article. While resources like WikiHow are already out there, many consumers first look to a source that's professionally associated with the subject matter before turning to a publicly sourced website. If your article is high in quality and garners enough traffic, it could even end up on a Google Answer card for common queries on the subject.



Clickbait articles tend to emphasize style over substance, and they're characterized by headlines that either aim to elicit an emotional response (e.g. "You'll Never Believe What Happened Next") or pose a rhetorical question (e.g. "Does Eating Vegetables Make You Fat?"). If greater social visibility is what you're after, experimentation with this type of article is well worth your time.



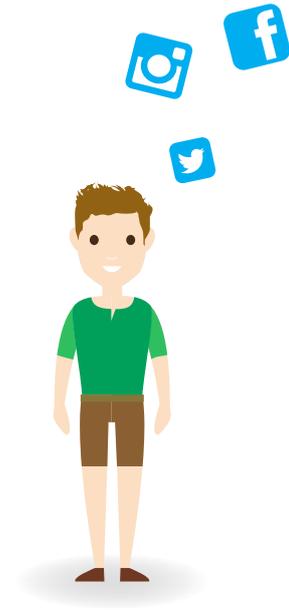
Listicles are just what they sound like: articles formatted around a list of items. Marked by headlines that begin with the number of items on the list (e.g. 7 Mind-Blowing Content Marketing Statistics), this is a powerful article type, as it presents "need-to-know" information in an accessible and easy-to-digest format. Instead of having to follow a narrative, readers can scroll through several succinct descriptions and even skip around according to their interests.



Newsy Articles unsurprisingly imitate the style of a newspaper or journal, replicating the objective, straightforward tone commonly utilized by professional journalists. This style lends immense credibility to your publication, but it's worth noting that it limits your ability to promote your brand. Thus, it's best to publish this type of article with the stated goal of boosting your brand's participation in industry-wide conversations as opposed to driving direct sales.

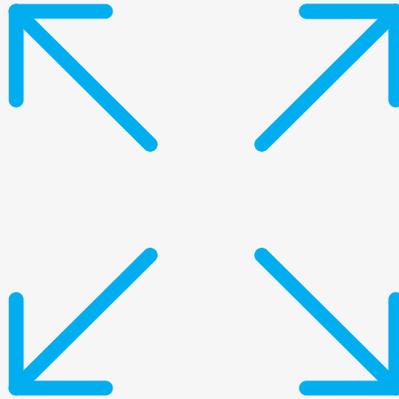


Social Reaction Posts primarily draw on user-generated content from any number of social media platforms, including embedded tweets, Instagram and Facebook posts, as well as comments posted to popular articles and stories. These articles offer an excellent means of summarizing the public reaction to meaningful events in your space, rather than offering in-depth analysis of the events themselves. And not only are they relatively easy to produce, but they also implicitly encourage your readers to interact with the content, driving greater engagement for a relatively small investment.



Explainers resemble how-tos, except they typically cover complicated subjects that might otherwise require deep research to grasp. Furthermore, they're written in standard article form, as opposed to a step-by-step breakdown.





EXPAND BEYOND YOUR PUBLICATION

You want your best writers and thinkers publishing to your blog, but you can't be a thought leader if your work is confined to a single website.

Build up the name recognition of your company's executives and contributing team members by securing meaningful article placements in industry publications. This will not only help your writers reach new audiences, but also position your entire company as a source of meaningful insights and relevant conversations. External publication also allows you to contribute to wider discussions in a more public setting, making your role as an industry thought leader more evident to both new and current audiences.

Every guest article that gets published generates credibility and authority among new audiences, which may in turn follow your brand on social media and connect directly through a variety of both on- and offline channels. What's more, it's a strategy with a snowball effect built in: bigger and more influential publications are likely to post your articles when they see you've already secured placements and built new audiences elsewhere.

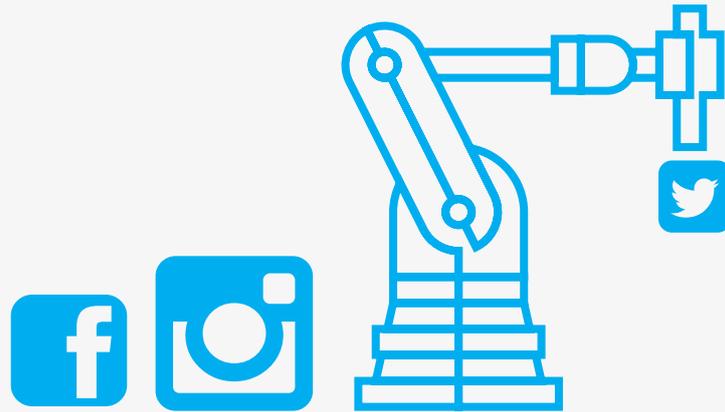
We've covered a lot of ground in the last several pages, but if you can only pick one essential takeaway, it's this: publish regularly, but don't let quality suffer as a result of quantity. You should be proud enough of every article to promote it on your social profiles, as the content should demonstrate your expertise while separating your brand from your competitors.

PROMOTING YOUR CONTENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA



Speaking of promotion.... Building and populating a brand publication is an incredibly impressive feat in its own right, but you can't simply press publish and then let it lie. Not only must you be willing to promote your content, but you have to do it in a way that demonstrates relevance to the people you want to engage and impress.

As discussed, placing your content on external publications is one effective tactic to drive greater brand awareness, yet that approach won't necessarily send meaningful traffic to your digital properties overnight. Adding content to your website over time through regular publishing will similarly boost organic search traffic in the medium term. To generate the immediate results that many marketers are tasked with producing, you'll have to grab users online with well-executed, organic and paid promotion of your content on social media



SOCIAL MEDIA AUTOMATION

The world of social media moves at lightspeed, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Staying current in such an environment can be grueling, yet doing so is an absolutely necessary component of effective content promotion.

Organizations must treat the practice of regularly posting links on multiple platforms several times a day as the bare minimum, while going above and beyond by closely following developing stories and then capitalizing on them by posting relevant articles from the archives. That's no small amount of work, which is why social media automation has become an attractive option for businesses everywhere -- and especially SMBs.

Tools like HootSuite and Buffer allow you to schedule posts to go live in advance, which is obviously useful both for those times when there's simply too much else to do and during holidays and vacations. These tools also provide guidance on the times of the day, week, and year during which your audience is most likely to interact with your post, which can help you devise a publishing schedule.

But there's always a danger in relying on automation to communicate with consumers, who increasingly expect their interactions with brands to be highly individualized. That's why it's key to add a personal touch to almost every social post, or to create enough variations of your post so that each one published throughout the day is noticeably different from the others. Automation is a necessary component of effective daily posting, but pure automation cancels out the human voice you've worked to establish for your brand. Thus, balancing automation and personal involvement should be a priority in your social media efforts.

And assuming that you're posting to multiple platforms, be sure not to treat them all the same way. Best practices for publishing on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Google Plus are easy to track down online, but at the very least, keep character limits in mind as develop unique sets of posts for each platform. And every time you post to the same social media site, try to use a different, relevant hashtag in order to boost your participation in as many ongoing conversations as possible. You should also go ahead and reply to other users' posts to strike up brand-new conversations.

Finally, consider your social media presence as more than just a means of publicity for your blog content. Use it to listen to industry conversations about trending topics and solicit opinions from your users -- social media is a two-way street, and treating it purely as an echo chamber wastes an excellent opportunity to learn more about your audience.



CREATING IMAGERY



**ARTICLES WITH IMAGERY RACK UP 94%
MORE VIEWS THAN THOSE WITHOUT**

As Kissmetrics reports, articles with images garner 94% more views than those without, and the same rule applies to social posts. Whether readers find your work on external publications, on your website, through social media, or through search, it's more likely to be clicked on, engaged with, and read if it features an image -- particularly if it's original, rather than a stock photo.

One type of graphic that's always more likely to get shared is the mini-infographic because it combines engaging imagery with useful information. Statistics that sourced from within your vertical or niche are even more shareable and engaging because the more specific a data point is to a given industry, the harder it is to find. Of course, poor design isn't likely to add much credibility to your brand, and some experience with Adobe Photoshop and/or InDesign would come in handy here. However, if you're able to illustrate compelling statistics in a way that's at least somewhat visually pleasing, you're bound to drive considerably more traffic to that post.

One area in which we have found infographics to be particularly useful is on social media. By creating small, simple graphics specifically for the purposes of social posts (we call them pictograms), you create a unique incentive for a given platform's users to follow your brand -- the satirical web publication Clickhole actually practices this to perfection on its Twitter account. Further piggybacking on Clickhole's success, including easily digestible information in such a shareable format makes a great recipe for viral content.

Another bonus of creating your own graphics or images from scratch is that they're subsequently eligible to rank on Google Image search, creating another channel through which readers can find your content.

**USE HASHTAGS TO
PARTICIPATE IN CONVERSATIONS
RELEVANT TO YOUR INDUSTRY
AND BRAND**

**FIND A GOOD BALANCE
BETWEEN AUTOMATED POSTING
AND A PERSONAL VOICE**

**SOCIAL ISN'T JUST ABOUT
YOUR BLOG**

**SOLICIT OPINIONS FROM AND START
CONVERSATIONS WITH USERS**

**CREATE
UNIQUE VISUAL CONTENT
JUST FOR SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS
(PICTOGRAPHS AND PICTOGRAMS)**



PAID PROMOTION

It's worth considering paid promotion on networks like Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook. Allocation of spend for each of these channels should depend largely on the audience of the channel on which you're publishing: if you're targeting professional personas, LinkedIn is one obvious choice; if your audience is primarily interested in images, you might try Instagram or Pinterest.

Once your social campaigns have been running for some time, you can use analytics to track whether you're reaching your target audience. Pay close attention to the performance of promoted posts, and shift your budget around if certain campaigns don't seem to be working -- there's no sense in pouring money into social media just for the sake of saying you have a paid presence.

Facebook is one channel on which you're likely to score some broader wins, as it has a huge usership and is relatively affordable on a cost-per-engagement basis. For targeted campaigns that speak to exactly the right audiences, there's no better channel than LinkedIn. Campaigns and content on LinkedIn can be promoted to specific job titles, locations, industries, groups, and skill sets. This specificity is particularly useful for B2B companies that want to either reach a high-level audience of CEOs and other executives with their pitch or speak directly to middle management with advice for making them better at their jobs. Finally, content ads represent another good bet for your ad investment dollars, offering many of the benefits of native advertising without the premium pricing.

**LEAD GENERATION
STRATEGIC
VALUES TO
TRANSFORM
YOUR
BLOGGING
INTO BUSINESS
RESULTS**



54%

**INBOUND MARKETING DELIVERS
54% MORE LEADS**

Everything about your content strategy -- from brand voice, to the subjects covered, to the way you promote blog posts -- will ultimately be judged by its ability to generate new leads for your business.

The more diverse your library of content, the better it's promoted, and the farther outside your own webpage it spreads, the more likely your content strategy will produce more qualified leads for less money

than traditional marketing tactics.

Many companies expect the relationship between branded content and new leads to be more direct than it really is, imagining that calls-to-action and promoted blog posts will immediately drive new, converting customers to the site. To be certain, this is exactly what happens in many cases, but the vast majority of your leads will result from the reputation built by your content strategy over time. Reputation is what really begets leads, because if people know about and respect you in the industry, they'll be more likely to move forward as a client or partner.

But that's your long-term strategy -- what can you do with your content in the here and now to generate more leads? Let's run through a few tactics specific to each content type.

One of the easiest ways to generate leads is to gate your deeper, long-form content, such as ebooks, whitepapers, and webinars. Asking for readers' basic information like their names, email addresses, job titles, and employers isn't invasive -- it's a common and expected practice that indicates the content the reader is downloading carries legitimate value. Once you've collected a satisfactory amount of data, you can follow up on these leads with ad and drip email campaigns targeted to each user's vertical and job function.

The information you obtain from gated content is called 1st party data because it's passed directly from the reader to you. While obtaining this information costs nothing on its own, it's not always that dynamic or useful. You can learn the person's name and email address, but that doesn't arm your marketing team with all the info it needs to craft truly individualized campaigns that engage and pull new leads further down the sales funnel. For more detailed customer profiles, you might consider purchasing information from a 3rd party data provider.

As you continue to publish content, come to an internal consensus on which metrics represent successful lead generation. Do you consider time spent on your site the strongest indication that a lead will convert? Are you more interested in search position? Obviously, both factors are important, but deciding whether the primary goal of your content strategy is reader attention or audience intention is essential to the successful coordination of your marketing efforts.

Of course, the proof is in the pudding. So let's run through 10 notable examples of the remarkable results brands can earn when they correctly execute a smart brand publishing strategy.



EMPLOYER BRAND

Indicators of Future Success - Intelligence vs Attitude

Intelligence is important, but attitude is everything. Learn why recruiters should focus on a candidate's outlook, rather than their IQ.



CANDIDATE MARKETING

How the World's Top Employers Attract Top Talent

While the world's top employers attract top talent with their reputations alone, a bit of extra effort ensures that they bring in the best-fit candidates.



WORKPLACE EQUALITY

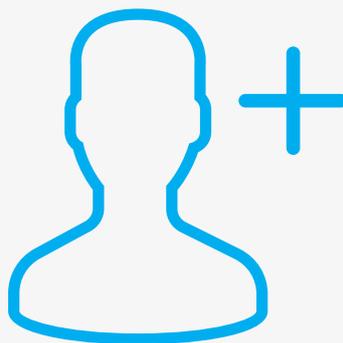
Why Blind Hiring Should Be a Business Best Practice

The only path to truly diversifying a workforce might be eliminating all identifying characteristics from the application process.

**CASE STUDY #1:
ALL RANKINGS RISE WITH THE TIDE OF CONTENT**

A Software as a Service client in the HR space experienced a lift in organic search traffic of **+31%** by dotting their i's and crossing their t's in terms of SEO, but it wasn't until they dedicated themselves to brand publishing that they broke through and became an industry leader. A year of daily publishing saw sitewide traffic increase **+205%**, with a **+198%** increase in organic search traffic, a **+332%** increase in traffic from social channels, and a **+339%** increase in referral traffic. In addition, they gained top 3 rankings in the SERPs for the most competitive terms in their industry.





CASE STUDY #2: GOAL-ORIENTED CONTENT DELIVERS NEW CUSTOMERS

The more specific your digital objectives, the more specific your content should be. To that end, some of our B2B clients have developed very focused lists of target prospects. One in particular wanted to pitch a national grocery store chain, and we helped them develop and publicize an analysis of the chain's performance using our client's software. Our analysis was shared internally throughout the target company -- the very next day, the CMO of the chain had our client on the phone. They've been a customer ever since.

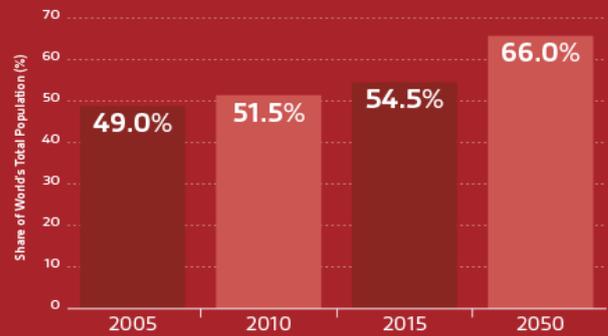
CITIES MUST EMBRACE THE INTERNET OF THINGS NOW

Digital Trends

As the global population continues to rise, urban population density is rising right along with it. The percentage of the total population living in cities has is about top 55%, and the UN estimates that by 2050, this number may climb as high as 66%. With many cities already strained to the limit when it comes to providing necessary services and maintaining a reasonable quality of life, it's clear that something must change in order to prevent sheer chaos from ensuing.

The Internet of Things offers the first and most viable solution to this crisis of untenable urban density. Sensor technology can help cities run more efficiently, providing a variety of data metrics and analytical tools aimed at reducing a city's operational and maintenance-related costs while dramatically improving its residents' day-to-day lives.

Global Urban Population Rising to Precarious New Heights



Source: United Nations, World Urbanization Prospects

CASE STUDY #3: GIVE CREDIT WHERE CREDIT IS DUE

Highlight the prospects and allies in your market when they do something praiseworthy. One of our clients works with government bodies to help them “go digital.” We wrote an article for them about the most technologically advanced city governments in the world and promoted it to both the municipalities featured and those in close geographic proximity. The next day, our client had the mayors of three major cities on the phone.



Hotel Quebec Sues Laurent Azoulay, Guest, Over Bad TripAdvisor Review

The Huffington Post Canada

Posted: 08/23/2013 1:53 pm EDT | Updated: 08/23/2013 2:00 pm EDT

CASE STUDY #4: ONE BREAKING STORY CHANGES EVERYTHING

When you employ a brand newsroom, you're able to break news in your market. When we broke a developing story from French-Quebec Radio on behalf of our client in the review monitoring space, we created a viral hit that garnered over **60,000** views in two days. Our story was picked up by CBS News, NBC, the Huffington Post, and many trade publications. We generated tons of high-quality links, and the story garnered more visits in those two days than the site had seen in the last two years.

What's the best SEO plugin for
WORDPRESS ?

WORDPRESS POWERS 68% OF WEBSITES WHOSE CMS IS KNOWN.*

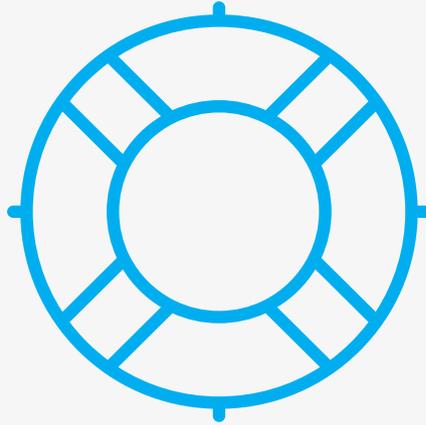


*According to Dataprovider.com based on sample of 4803718 websites.

THAT'S 22.1% OF THE ENTIRE WEB.

**CASE STUDY #5:
 LOOK INSIDE FOR ORIGINAL INSIGHTS**

Look to your own data to generate original insights about your market. We used a client's internal, proprietary data to develop an infographic about website technology adoption. We promoted the graphic and got it placed in Forbes with a link to our client as the source of the data.



CASE STUDY #6: BE A HELPFUL CRITIC

One of our clients in the language training space spotted a cultural faux pas that Google had included in its daily doodle (the search engine giant had mistakenly identified the Ghanaian flag). We quickly wrote up a post calling attention to the error, and our correction garnered attention from both Google itself and the media at large.

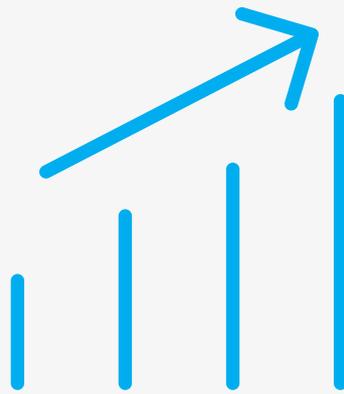
The Orange Umbrella

Resources for the modern insurance agent
go.preciseleads.com



CASE STUDY #7: BRAND PUBLISHING FOR QUICK RESULTS

There's real proof that daily publishing generates dramatic increases in engagement and traffic across a given website. A client in the insurance space saw traffic increase **+10x**, with a commensurate increase of **+175%** in terms of leads generated, and a **+123%** increase in customers in the first quarter of publishing alone!



CASE STUDY #8: AUDIENCE GROWTH EQUALS BUSINESS GROWTH

We've worked with an app building platform for nearly three years, publishing daily across their site and on their behalf in trade publications. In that time, they have more than tripled the number of apps created on their platform (to over **3 million!**) while achieving meaningful profitability.



CASE STUDY #9: JOINING THE SOCIAL MEDIA FRAY

When you publish every day, you bring a stream of original insights to your market. We place content at the center of your social media activity and grow social audiences across all channels. A client in the higher education space has seen their audience grow by over **+1600%** in less than a year by contributing their own original insights on a daily basis.



CASE STUDY #10: WHEN YOU TALK, THE WORLD LISTENS

When you behave like a publisher, the news covers you. A client in the mining services space was recently asked to publish a regular series on Mining.com (the most prominent publication in their space), which cited their consistent, quality coverage of industry news and trends. Their column now generates a regular stream of highly qualified referral traffic.

CONCLUSION

It's almost 2017, and marketers everywhere are getting serious about brand publishing; more so than ever before, the players ultimately responsible for generating new business and greater brand awareness are recognizing that they need to treat this approach as a legitimate sales and marketing tactic.

Executives can have a hard time understanding that business can come from the internet or from social media, which can make it challenging to secure initial buy-in and budget for content marketing initiatives. To generate enthusiasm and communicate the value of content, consider showcasing work from some of the leaders in your market. By furnishing a tangible vision of what brand publishing and content marketing is already doing for companies like yours, you'll be better positioned to compel key decision-makers to take the plunge.

At L&T, we believe that brand publishing can be a sustainable marketing channel for companies of all sizes. Its successes are measurable, and there are few barriers to entry -- except for the will and time investment required to saying something interesting every day.

Brand publications are catching on as a practical avenue to success because they're inherently democratic in reach; they doesn't have to require a ton of money to build and they don't make it all about who you do and don't know in your industry. In short, if you're creating great content, you have a real shot at success.

When companies build a body of compelling work around their brands, they also build their reputations and influence. And as you continuously demonstrate your expertise to your market, you can curate relevant, loyal audiences that care about what you have to say. Great content gives your business the opportunity to both deepen your connection with a community of readers and generate great data about that audience. Doing so both enhances your marketing efforts and adds value to potential customers' jobs and daily lives.

A commitment to brand publishing is a commitment to your business. If you dare to have an opinion and broadcast it, your market will answer the call.

ABOUT L&T

L&T is a company that focuses on transforming brands into influential publishers in their niche. We build audiences and influence online on behalf of our clients and have built impactful content programs with clients like NASDAQ, Deloitte, Fairmont Hotels, and Lenovo. To learn more about L&T's brand publishing services and solutions, reach out through [our website](#) or email us at info@landt.co.