

Ecommerce
Content Marketing
Playbook

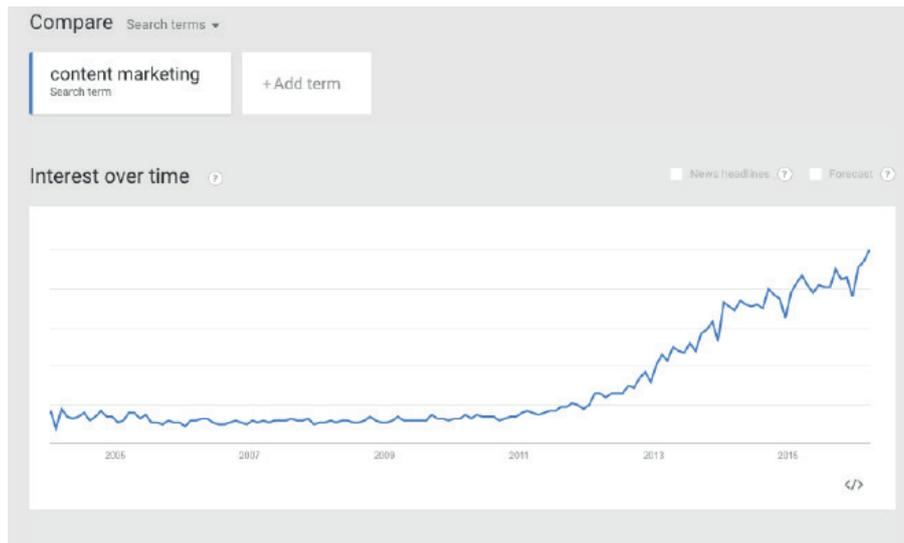


 AmeriCommerce

INTRODUCTION

Content marketing has exploded in popularity over recent years. And it's fundamentally changing the way E-Commerce stores promote themselves.

A quick Google Trends search reveals just how dramatic this rise has been.



Why?

Because recent studies suggest **content marketing costs 62%** less than traditional marketing and generates about 3 times as many leads.

Let's start by defining "content marketing."

What is content marketing?

In contrast to traditional (read ‘old-fashioned’) forms of marketing—which were interruptive, obtrusive and inherently promotional—content marketing primarily adds value to the customer. It’s the creation of interesting, engaging, informative, educational and/or entertaining content. Content here is catch all for just about anything you can access online: blog posts, white papers, ebooks, podcasts, videos, email sequences...the list goes on.

Content marketing isn’t overtly promotional, but rather it’s designed to inspire action that leads to real profits.

These benefits of content marketing are profound:

- Improved SEO for your store
- Enhanced brand awareness
- Greater reach to new audiences
- Retaining existing customers with help, advice and support
- Broader social reach and engagement
- Increased product awareness and new selling opportunities.

E-Commerce and Content—A Match Made in Heaven

Content marketing is a must for E-Commerce store owners. Not only does it help build relationships and contribute to a great customer experience, it differentiates your brand from other retailers in your niche.

Above all, content marketing adds value to your prospective and current customers. And it does that for free.

Bottom line: content is going to help you attract and convert new customers and turn them into loyal fans of your brand.

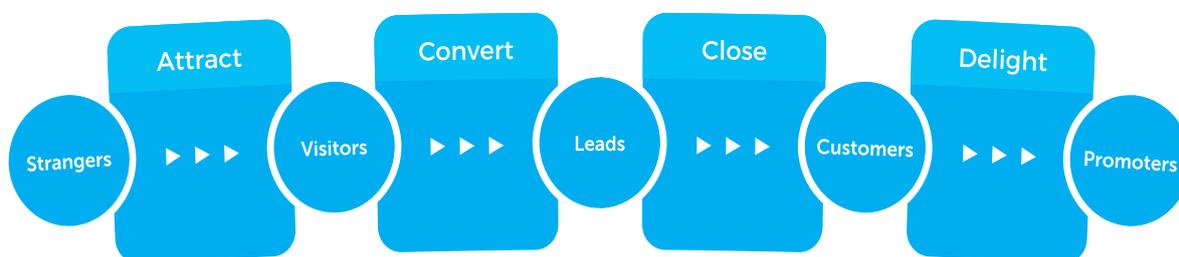


HubSpot's Inbound Methodology

The biggest mistake rookie content marketers make is to assume that, simply because they create content, customers will immediately buy their stuff by the boatload.

Content marketing is great, sure. But it's a slower burn than this. You generally need to produce a wide range of different content to move your customers through the buyer journey...step-by-step.

HubSpot's Inbound Methodology is a great model for understanding how this works.



It works in 4 stages, which will form the 4 chapters of this e-book:

Attract. There are billions of people out there on the web. The 'Attract' stage is all about bringing these strangers to your store through organic search, social media or outreach.

Convert. Next, you need to convert those anonymous visitors into leads. This involves capturing their basic contact information—sometimes as little as an email address—so you can nurture them towards the next step.

Close. At this stage, just like the name implies, your leads need to be converted into paying customers.

Delight. Great content marketing doesn't stop when the purchase is complete. At the 'Delight' stage, content is used to optimize the customer experience to turn them into loyal customers and brand advocates for your store.

This multi-step approach to content marketing is a great way to breakdown any store owner's content marketing strategy. It will help you determine exactly what type of content you need to create to move someone from a stranger, to a visitor, to a lead, to a customer...to an evangelist for your brand.

So let's get started...



CHAPTER 1: ATTRACT



The day your store went live, you opened its doors to more than 3 billion digital strangers hoping that they'd somehow find it. Did they? In most cases...no.

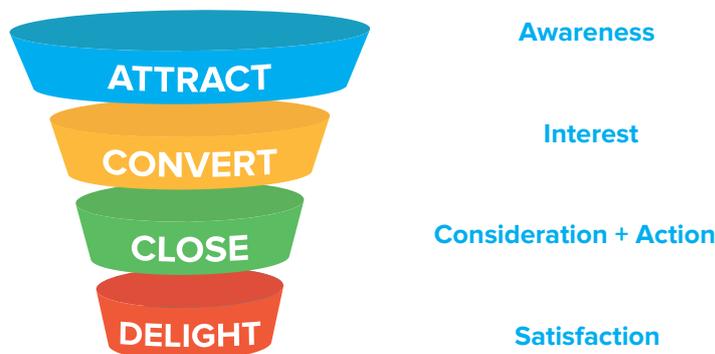
But don't despair. The 'Attract' stage is all about creating great content that brings these strangers to your store.

Bring targeted strangers to your store.

At this point, your customers are at what we'd call 'top of the funnel.' They may never have heard of your store nor your products, so your content shouldn't be too sales heavy or promotional.

Instead, it needs to be relevant, engaging and interesting to your target audience. Provide helpful tips, thought provoking articles and tools they can use. You get the picture!

Even more than that...it must solve a problem. That's where delivering value comes in. The product-specific and promotional stuff comes later in the buyer journey.



In order to ‘attract’ customers to your store, you need to understand where they are...digitally speaking.

With 93% of all online experiences beginning with search, there’s no doubt that SEO needs to be a huge focus. Indeed, **KissMetrics research** suggests organic search accounts for around 30% of traffic for a typical E-Commerce store.

There’s also a lot to be said for trying to position your content on relevant third party websites, blogs and publications where your audience might already hang out.

Let’s take a look at some of the specific tools at your disposal...

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Blogging

If there's one tactic you can take away from this ebook and get started on today, it's blogging. Here are just a few reasons why:



Blog articles are a fantastic way to bring new visitors to your store, particularly through organic search. Why? Because each and every article you write (1) extends your digital footprint and (2) can be optimized to rank for keywords and phrases your target customers are looking for in search engines.

High quality blog articles also generate social shares and backlinks, which all combines to make blogging a powerful vehicle for customer attraction.

But what you should write about? Here are three E-Commerce case studies to see how it works in the real world.

West Coast Shaving

What they sell: Safety razors, straight razors and shaving accessories.

What they write about: The 'Classic Shaving Blog' is a mixture of informative guides, product reviews, and light-hearted entertainment.

Example article titles:

- Safety Razor Guide.
- 100 Years of Men's Beauty.
- Political Primping: What Today's Most Popular Politicians Would Look Like With Facial Hair.
- Top-Rated Moustache Wax for Movember.

Why it's great: This blog strikes a great balance between fun and entertainment. Some of the light-hearted, fun content really embraces the idea that you don't need to be promotional to promote. The content is well aligned with the target buyers' interests and walks them through products and information that are relevant to them. This approach increases brand awareness and helps the site rank for important keywords.

Nurture My Body

What they sell: Organic, sustainable personal care products.

What they write about: This blog is incredibly well aligned with the core brand values, with list posts, insights and expert tips about personal care.

Example article titles:

- 4 Essentials for Treating Winter Skin.
- 5 Unexpected Ways Yoga Nurtures Your Body.
- Are You Using This All-Natural Ingredient That Is Packed With Vitamin C?
- Natural Gym Bag Essentials For Keeping Your New Year's Resolution
- 4 Ingredients Every Woman Should Avoid In Her Products.

Why it's great: All the posts are well-written, well-visualized and clearly optimized for keywords that matter to their target customers. The articles answer questions that a potential, top-of-the-funnel customer would be likely to search for. By providing answers, they immediately position themselves as the go-to source for exactly this type of content.

Eurway

What they sell: Modern home and office furniture.

What they write about: The Eurway blog features a wide range of design inspiration, combined with in-depth product information.

Example Article Titles:

- Inspiration for the Office.
- Season of Outdoor Living.
- Customer picks: Hanging lights.

Why it's great: This blog tackles the main pain points faced by target customers at this preliminary stage of the buyer journey. Without being insulting, it empathizes with its audience who feel like their current home or office setup is more than a little tired. The company strikes a nice balance in tone, which is inspirational rather than promotional. At the same time, it's clear that their products are all available through the Eurway store, which can only help drive product awareness and traffic to product pages.

Getting Started with Blogging

Your first step is to find a suitable content management system through which you can publish and administrate your blog. There are a number of options available. Some of the more popular include **WordPress**, **HubSpot** and **Tumblr**. Many E-Commerce platforms (including AmeriCommerce) allow you to manage your blog right from within the backend of your store, making the overlap between content and commerce seamless.

Next, you need to decide what to write about. Here's a crash course:

- Identify who your buyer is. Build a nuanced picture of them. **Buyer personas** are a great help here.
- Isolate the pain points your products are designed to address. What need are you addressing?
- Drill down further: what specifically would your customers search for on a search engine? These are the 'keywords' you should build your articles around to help your customers find you. **KeywordEye.com** has a question finder tool to help. Simply type in a keyword and it will give you a list of questions people are asking, to help you with your titles.
- Do keyword research. **Keywordtool.io** is a free tool that generates really useful insights including monthly search volume and level of competition.
- Write titles that are **as punchy and clickable as possible**. There's no silver bullet here. Be creative and keep an eye on what seems to resonate with your audience.
- Optimize the articles you write for your chosen keywords. **You'll find some useful tips for beginners in this article.**

Your articles can be as long or as short as you like. There's lots of conflicting data out there. Some reports suggest that you should aim for frequency over depth (i.e., length) to drive the best results. Others argue that you should focus your effort onto a small number of long-form (over 2,000 words) and authoritative posts.

No two stores are the same, so our advice is to write to a length that's comfortable for you. If you have time, maybe try mixing it up. This will give you some real world data, based on your own store users, to suggest which kind of articles work best.

It's also important to use high quality images and screenshots in your blog posts. Images invariably break up large chunks of text, making articles easier to read, easier to digest and infinitely more engaging.

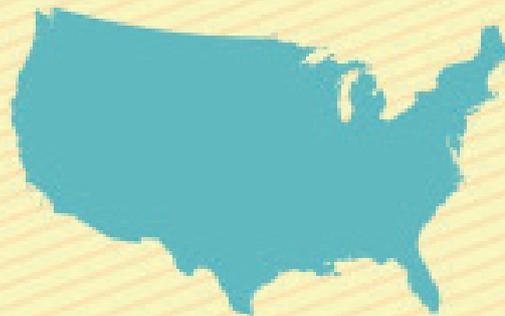


DATA DRIVEN ECOMMERCE

SPARKPAYSM

The E-Commerce Market

Ecommerce already accounts for about **8%** of total retail sales in the U.S. is expected to outpace sales growth at bricks-and mortar stores over the next **five years**.



\$220 Billion Dollar Market in the U.S. alone, growing by nearly 17% a year!

Online Retail Sales to Hit \$370 Billion by 2017

Ecommerce sales in western Europe are expected to grow at an even faster rate than the U.S. In the next five years, from **€112 billion** in 2012 to **€191 billion** by 2017, representing a compound annual growth rate of **11%** (versus 9% in the U.S.).



Online retail sales already accounts for **13%** of the total UK economy

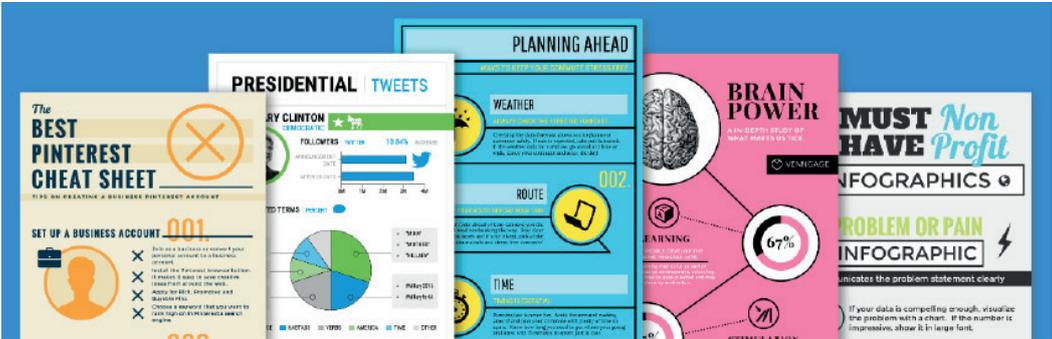
this is Expected to increase it's shares to **15%** in 2017 in the UK.

www.amercommerce.com/blog/Data-Driven-Ecommerce-Infographic

They're so readable and easy-to-digest that you'll often find it easier to get an infographic placed on a third party website than a whole guest post.

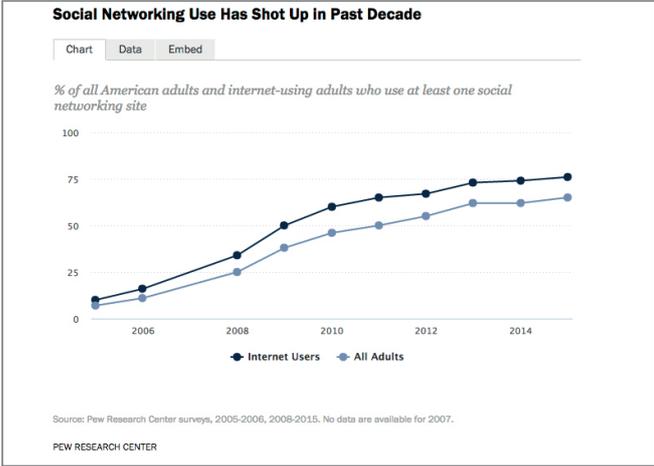
It's one of the best visual assets to leverage as an inbound linking tool. And, if you promote it on social media, you can use demographic and **psychographic targeting** to put your content right in front of the people who are most likely to respond, whether that's liking, sharing, or heading to your store website to check you out further.

You don't have to be a professional designer or shell out thousands of dollars to build beautiful infographics. Venngage is a free infographic maker that runs on pre-set templates and drag-and-drop functionality:



Social Media

Social Media is another potential goldmine for customer attraction. The use of social networking sites has exploded in the past 10 years – and research suggests that **53% of Americans** who follow brands on social are more loyal to those brands. This makes social a must-use tool.





When it comes to attracting customers via social, many of the same rules apply. Content is king, and you need to strike the right balance between education, fun and promotion. They're each important!

Social is a great distribution channel for content you've already created. As we mentioned above, if you allocate ad spending to social, you can easily target ideal demographics. Done right, this is a powerful and low-cost way to reach new potential customers. **(Related Reading: 5 Ridiculously Powerful Facebook Ad Targeting Strategies)**

There are, of course, a number of channels to choose from. So which is right for you?

Well, we've already touched on the importance of buyer personas, and this applies to social marketing, too. It's all about where your audience already hangs out.

B2B sellers may find real traction and value from a presence on LinkedIn, whereas, if you're selling B2C, then you may find more value from a platform like **Pinterest**.

Whichever channels you choose, ensure you feature social-share buttons next to every piece of content you create...as well as on your product pages.



Content Marketing Personalization

Personalization means offering visitors content tailored specifically to them based on their demographics and interests.



Reports suggest that 95% of all B2B organizations make some attempt to segment their content based on their audience.

Of course in order to deliver personalized content, you need to understand the goals, challenges, pain points and motivations of your customer.

It's as much about listening as anything else.

(Related reading: Content Marketing Personalization: When and How to Use It)

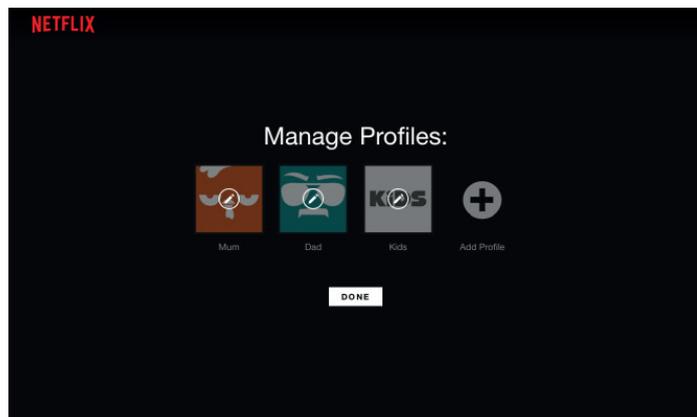
How does this work in practice?

At the attract stage, you generally don't know a great deal about your website visitors. So you might consider giving them the tools to tailor their own content.

British newspaper The Guardian added a 'toggle' button that allowed users to opt out of news stories relating to the birth of the Royal Baby in July 2013.

Similarly, Netflix allows you to add multiple profiles to your account so the whole family can see content that would appeal to them—based on their viewing habits. This is a phenomenal example of how programming can be used to

serve up relevant content based on real life activity. serve up relevant content, based on real-life activity.



Both of these cases illustrate that it's wise to allow your users to 'filter' content from the jump.

To really get to know your prospective visitors, invest in social media. A typical users' profile is rich with insight about their interests, demographics, hobbies and more. This information can all be used to run tailored ad campaigns that put highly nuanced, targeted content in front of each customer type.

This gives you the ability to create highly personalized content for all your buyer personas and reach them with it in a way that grabs their attention.

ATTRACT - SUMMARY (TL;DR)

- Attract is all about getting visitors onto your site.
- Think about where your customers are already: search engines, social media and other websites in your niche.
- Create a blog and update it with regular, high-quality articles.
- Guest post to build thought leadership and generate high-authority back links.
- Design, post and share infographics to get across complicated issues in an easily digestible format.
- Get active on social networks and split your output between educational, fun and promotional. Distribute your blog content here and consider allocating an ad budget; this allows you to target your ideal customers based on a range of demographic characteristics.

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CHAPTER 2: CONVERT



The old saying goes, ‘Traffic is vanity. Conversion is sanity.’ There’s no doubt that high volumes of traffic can be great for your store. But the cold, hard truth is if none of them convert... you’re sunk.

Let’s think about some of the visitors you attracted to your site in step one. Some of them will, hopefully, buy your products on the spot. The majority, however, won’t be ready to purchase. And it gets worse: some may not ever purchase at all!)

Turn your anonymous visitors into warm leads to be followed up and nurtured with relevant content.

In fact, the team at email marketing company ReEngager often talk about a ‘3/47/50’ rule. Essentially, this refers to the idea that 3% of your visitors arrive will be ready to buy, 47% will buy in the future and 50% won’t ever make a purchase.

That 47% are the target for your ‘Convert’ and ‘Close’ content. It’s a huge number of visitors, and—potentially—a huge factor in your store’s success.

The goal in Convert is to turn your anonymous visitors into warm leads to be followed up and nurtured with relevant content. Without this vital stage you’ll be collecting water in a bucket full of holes!

In order to keep in touch, you need contact details from your visitors as well as permission to contact them.

Above all, that means building your email list. Here’s how:

Of course, the idea of writing a whole book can be intimidating, but you'd be surprised how much industry expertise you've assimilated through running your store. You absolutely can do it! And, if you decide you can't fit this into your busy schedule, you could simply outsource the task to a freelance writer.

When choosing a topic, monitor the traffic generated by your blog posts to see if there are any burning issues your customers seem to be facing. You can then position your Ebook or White Paper to address this need.

You could also try identifying an old, high-performing ebook in your niche, then set out to improve it and make it your own.

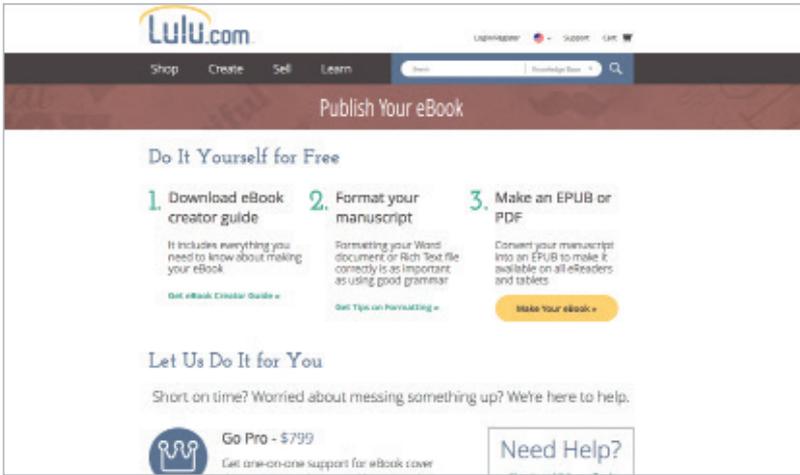
Because you're asking for contact details, this content needs to be more in-depth and useful than your standard blog posts.

So, let's pretend you're selling gourmet ice cream.

For your blog, you can rock the basic, entry-level, '101' content: the history of ice cream, 7 must-stock flavors, etc.

But your ebook? You really need to get down to the nitty gritty of what your target customer is looking for. You might try a piece like 'The 50 Greatest Gourmet Ice Cream Recipes of All Time' or 'The 37 Most Secretive Ice Cream Parlors in the World ... And How to Find Them Before You Die.'

There are a number of free tools to help you build your own ebooks and publish them as either an EPUB or PDF. (Check out [Lulu](#) which is one such free resource.



The Content Upgrade

We discussed blogging at length in Chapter One. Clearly, it's an amazing tool for traffic generation. But remember the mantra from the beginning of this section: traffic is vanity, conversion is sanity!



A visitor who reads an article without converting to your email list is, in truth, nothing more than a huge missed opportunity.

The Content Upgrade is a tactic endorsed by SEO expert Brian Dean, who credits it with a **785% increase in conversions** on his website.

The idea, essentially, is to offer an extra, bonus piece of content to your top-performing articles.

To begin with, use Google Analytics to identify the articles that generate the most traffic. Then, work to create a highly relevant 'upgrade' to that content. For example, if you wrote a list post that contained 10 tips—and that post performs consistently—then why not create a downloadable PDF that lists 20 more. You can use a service like **LeadPages** to gate it; in other words, to "hide" it behind an email sign-up form. Even better, you can check out **21 more examples from Brian Dean himself, right here.**

Email Newsletter Signups

These have been a staple of E-Commerce businesses for many years and remain one of the most effective ways to capture data.



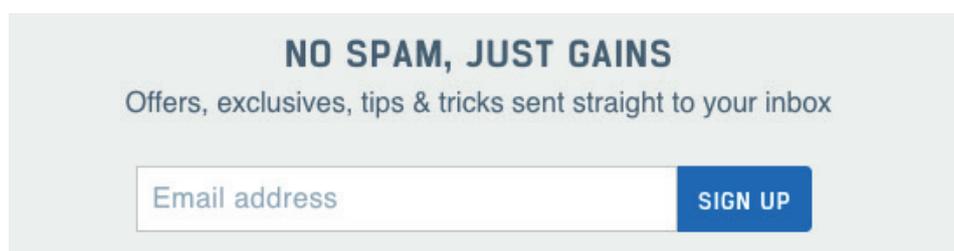
90% of customers say they'd prefer to receive updates from a company via email, as opposed to 10% who prefer social media.

Email is the most potent way to influence purchase decisions:

- 81% of online shoppers who receive emails based on previous shopping habits were at least somewhat likely to make a purchase as a result of targeted email. (eMarketer)
- When it comes to purchases made as a result of receiving a marketing message, email has the highest conversion rate (66%), when compared to social, direct mail and more. (DMA)
- A message is 5x more likely to be seen in email than via Facebook. (Radicati)
- 4.24% of visitors from email marketing buy something as compared to 2.49% of visitors from search engines and 0.59% from social media. (Monetate)
- 90% of email gets delivered to the intended recipient's inbox, whereas only 2% of your Facebook fans see your posts in their News Feed. (Forrester)

It's no surprise, with metrics like this, that the growth of an email list is a high priority for merchants.

But the bottom line is this: customers won't sign up for just anything. You need to make it clear that they're really gaining something by subscribing whether it's clever copywriting that lets the customer know they can expect the best offers ...

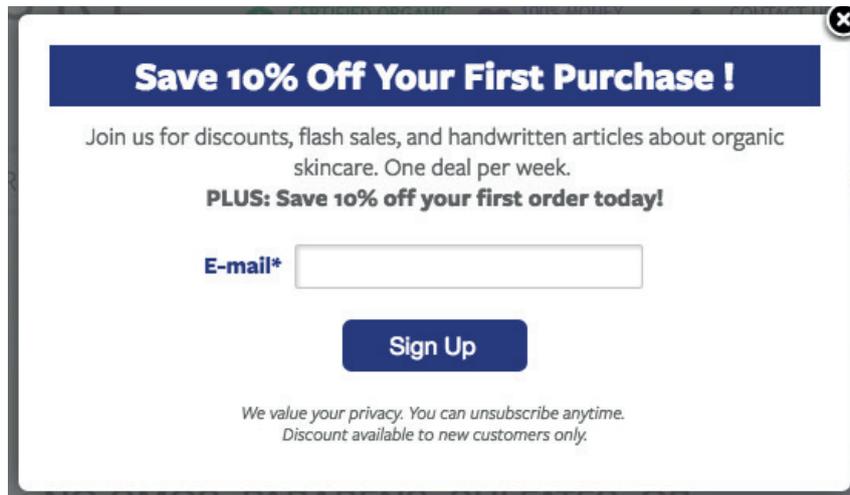


NO SPAM, JUST GAINS
Offers, exclusives, tips & tricks sent straight to your inbox

Email address

SIGN UP

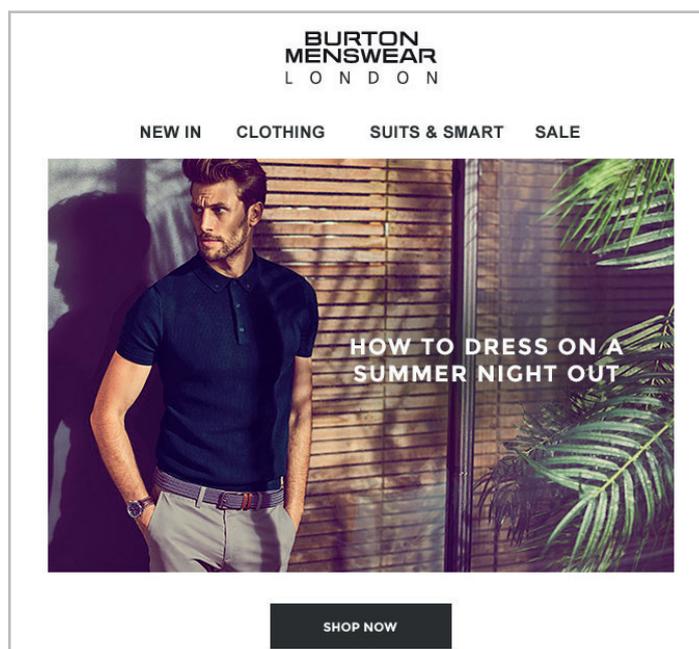
Or bona fide order discounts for newsletter subscribers...



These sign up forms can be placed all over your website: from your homepage, to product pages, to blog posts, to landing pages. They also work insanely well as pop-ups (or pop-overs). [\(Related Reading: 27 Tips on How to Get More Email Signups\)](#)

The email newsletter is a highly versatile medium and can be taken in whatever direction you like. You may choose to target your audience with content that you create or curate from around the web.

This example from British clothing company, Burton Menswear, leads with an interesting content angle: how to dress on a summer night out.



Discounts are always popular with email recipients as well as a great way to create a surge in sales.

MYPROTEIN
FUEL YOUR AMBITION

LAST CHANCE

MYSTERY DISCOUNT

FINAL HOURS

SAVE UP TO 40% OFF YOUR ENTIRE ORDER...

Enter **Mystery Discount** code below at basket to discover your savings - discount will range **between 10%-40%** throughout the day.

But be quick - offer ends **midnight tonight!**

Finally, you can use newsletters for branding purposes like soft drink company Innocent. Their popular monthly news round up has a mix of content, including brand building company updates, fun stories and product information.

the **innocent** news
Apple, grape, pear, plum

an alternative Valentine's Day

liquid love

flipping great

a tale of two drinks

inside fruit towers

and finally...

CONVERT – SUMMARY (TL;DR)

- The vast majority of traffic you generated at the ‘Attract’ stage will leave your website without making a purchase.
- Instead of just letting them go, capture your visitor’s contact information so you can keep in touch and nurture them as leads.
- Add a ‘subscribe’ form to your home page, your blog articles and as a pop-up.
- Make sure there’s some kind of incentive to signing up, whether it’s access to the best deals or an actual order discount.
- Create an Ebook or White Paper and have this on a landing or squeeze page so readers have to enter their email address before they can download it.
- Identify blog articles that generate the most traffic to your site and find a way to ‘upgrade’ it. Offer these upgrades as a gated, downloadable bonus piece of content...in exchange for your visitor’s email.

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CHAPTER 3: CLOSE



So far, we've discussed how to use content to generate more traffic and given you some ideas on how to convert that traffic into leads.

The next step, as you might have guessed, is to nurture those leads towards bona fide sales. The tips within this chapter can be used to nurture new leads into first-time customers, one-time purchasers into repeat customers and even reactivate 'at risk' or lapsed customers.

Provide relevant, targeted content to your list with the aim of inspiring profitable behaviors.

Segmentation & Nurture Sequences

Segmentation involves dividing your email list into specific groups based on their preferences. Nurture sequences are email campaigns you send to those individual groups.



By setting up email workflows—that is, timed and automated email sequences—you can deliver close leads with a fraction of the hard work and time sales calls demand.

One of the great things about automation is that it allows you to **segment your list and use different 'triggers'** to start your workflows. So, if someone downloads a particular piece of content, you can put them into an email sequence that's relevant to that content.

If someone views a product, or abandons their cart, you can—with the right CRM tools—send retargeting campaigns that directly address their prior activity within your store. If they sign up for your Newsletter, you can put them into your Newsletter workflow.

(Related Reading: 4 Email Tactics to Nurture Ecommerce Prospects)

Some leads will simply need a relevant, enticing offer to push them over the line. For others, you'll need to work through long nurture sequences. Generally, though, it's fine to be more promotional and salesy at this point. After all, your leads have opted-in and asked to hear from you.

Some of the workflows you may consider are:

- **Seasonal promotions**—The calendar is littered with events that you can potentially market around. Sure, there's the obvious stuff like the holidays, but what about other opportunities? Major televised sporting events, playoffs or championship games? Popular award shows or a TV series finale? Spring Break or election day? They all represent an opportunity to reach out to your customer with themed, relevant, fun content that could help drive purchases.
- **Abandoned Cart & Browse Retargeting**—Research puts the average cart abandonment rate anywhere between 60 and 75%. Whichever end of the spectrum you believe is accurate, there's no doubt that it's a huge number. Retargeting lets you follow up with customers who viewed or added your products to their cart but never complete their purchase. [The Anatomy of a Winning Cart Abandonment Email \(+11 Exceptional Examples.\)](#)
- **Newsletter**—Newsletters are an inherently popular model of customer communication. According to Nielsen Norman Group research, out of 100 customers, 10 prefer to hear from a company on social media while 90 prefer an email newsletter. And they're great because they're the epitome of balanced communication. Sure, you can sell products...but you can also show a more human side, share fun stuff that's happening in your business, and add value in the form of educational content. [\(Related Reading: Most Announcement Emails Suck Email: Here Are 5 That Don't\)](#)

Optimizing Product Pages

Ultimately, closing E-Commerce customers boils down to a great on-page experience.



The content you position on your product pages can play a key role in building the level of trust and confidence it takes to close sales.

You need to provide rich product descriptions that provide answers to any burning questions your customers may have.

You'll also want to include high-quality product visuals to compensate for one of the most significant drawbacks of online shopping; namely, the fact that customers can't touch and feel the product before purchasing. Indeed, **92.6% of shoppers say visuals are the most influential factor affecting purchase decisions.**

You can take stunning product photos, even on a budget, using our [Product Photography Cheat Sheet](#). But you may decide to go even further and include video:

Product Videos; The Numbers

- **73%** more visitors who watch product videos will buy.
- **71%** of consumers think video explains the product better.
- **57%** are less “surprised” by products with accompanying videos (reducing returns and increasing customer satisfaction).
- **58%** of shoppers think companies with product videos can be trusted.
- **96%** of shoppers find videos helpful when making purchase decisions.

Call-to-action buttons make or breaks product pages.

The most important feature, of course, is the call-to-action button. This serves as a virtual signpost telling your customer what to do next. And since so much of our browsing

experience is determined by visual hierarchy, there's a fascinating amount of psychology and brain science behind this!

Given the intricacies of CTA buttons, we've produced an entire ebook you can download for free here: [Supercharge Your E-Commerce Calls To Action](#)

Get the Calls To Action Ebook

ebook

Ebook: Supercharge Your Ecommerce Calls To Action

In the world of online business, there's - understandably - a huge focus on driving traffic. It stands to reason, after all, that the more visitors you attract, the more customers you'll likely acquire. But, with average Ecommerce conversion rates hovering around the 1-5% mark, more than 9 out of 10 of your visitors could be slipping through your fingers.

What's clear is that a little focus on supercharging your conversion rates can go a long way. This eBook shows how examples and actionable tips to Supercharge your calls-to-action.

26 Great Pages

[Download Ebook](#)

[Like](#) [Share](#) [Print](#) [Twitter](#) [Pin It](#)

CLOSE – SUMMARY (TL;DR)

- Email marketing is your best friend.
- With a combination of automation, segmentation and personalization, you can send engaging campaigns with very little setup work and even less ongoing maintenance.
- Send out seasonal promotions with relevant offers to entice customers to buy.
- Have fun and be educational in your regular email newsletters.
- Retargeting is a must. Abandoned-cart rates are incredibly high for most stores. Reach out and target these lapsed customers with reminders and special discounts.
- Optimize your product pages with rich product descriptions, FAQs, images, videos and more.
- Focus on your calls-to-action. Is it clear what your user should do next? Check out our [free ebook](#) for more.

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CHAPTER 4: DELIGHT



It's tempting to focus all your attention on the three stages we've already discussed. But if your store's really going to rock content marketing, then you need to go the extra mile!

At the 'Delight' stage, you're going to create content that's designed to turn one-time customers into people who love

and actively promote your store. The New York Times suggests that referrals can account for as much as **65%** of new business, so the role your customers take in marketing your business can't be understated.

Turn one-off shoppers into repeat customers, raving fans and brand advocates!

Incredibly, only **7% of consumers** say that their service experiences with a company exceed their expectations.

You've also probably heard the crazy statistics about the cost of customer acquisition as opposed to retention. **The White House Office of Consumer Affairs** found that it costs between

Review Requests

Review requests take proactive steps to solicit recommendations and ratings from customers.

Customer Reviews: The Numbers

- **8%** of customers consult reviews when making purchases.
- **50** or more reviews per product can lead to a 4.6% increase in conversion rates.
- **Consumer reviews** are trusted nearly 12 times more than manufacturer descriptions.
- Presence of bad reviews actually improves conversions by **67%**, perhaps because customers feel they're more confident in making a balanced decision as they're fully informed of both the positive and negative sides of a product



It's also interesting to note that for every unhappy customer who complains, it's estimated that **another 26 will remain silent**. Failure to 'ask' means failure to 'understand' the true picture of your customer experience. And if you can't understand experience then you sure can't improve it!

Reviews give you unique user generated content. Not only does this help convince potential customers, it can also be indexed by search engines.

Above all, reviews show you care what happens to your customers after you have their money. And that's the only way to not lose your store's most profitable source of reoccurring revenue: current customers.

Feedback Surveys

Rather than asking for reviews on the product, you might choose to run surveys that collate feedback on your service itself.

This is much less public, but no less useful. Surveys generate honest feedback that allows you to refine your customer relationships. They also present your business as open, honest and humble.



This doesn't necessarily need to be a huge questionnaire. You might choose to go with a simple 'traffic light' system where you ask users to identify how they'd rank your overall service. You can then reach out to customers who answered negatively to understand more about where you fell short.

A short questionnaire like this typically increases the volume of responses you can expect.



Instructional Guides

Nothing undermines a purchase more severely than being unable to use it!



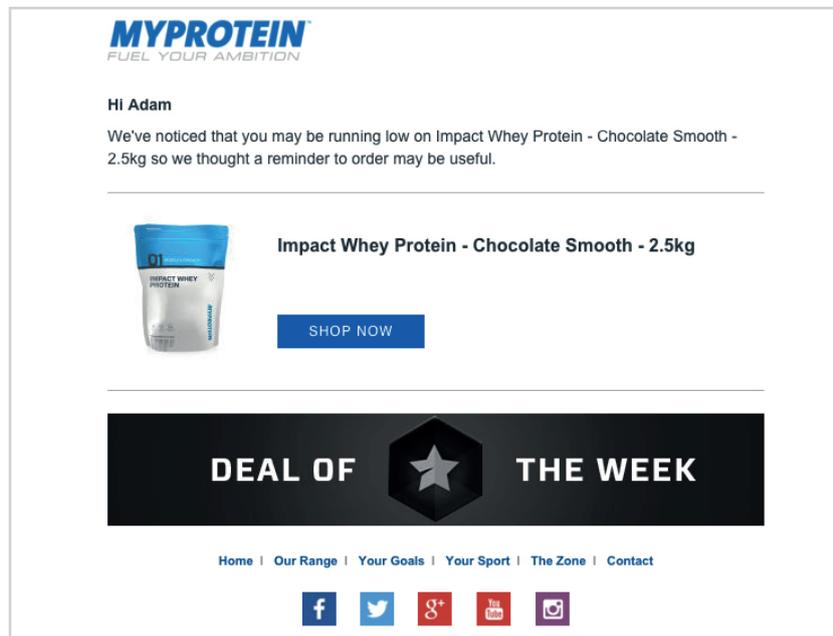
If you're selling products that are difficult to assemble or complex to use, you could produce a range of content designed to help your customers get the most out of it.

IKEA, for example, identified that one of the major issues customers had with their flat-pack furniture was that they often found it difficult to assemble using paper instructions alone. So they went ahead and created a range of **Assembly Videos** to show customers exactly what they should do and in what order.

The same principle applies to software products. The guys at **Mavenlink** have a highly sophisticated and nuanced project management system with a lot of features that users might not necessarily be aware of or find easy to use. In response, they produced a series of 50+ videos that explained their features in depth.

Replenishment/Reorder Reminders

Many stores reach out to customers when their orders need to be replenished, as in the below example:



Clearly, this is a sales email. But because it's timely and targeted, a replenishment and reorder reminder is well received by consumers.

This is low-hanging fruit when it comes to boosting your revenue. **70%** of companies, after all, believe it's cheaper to retain a customer than it is to acquire a new one. In fact, research suggests that the more times a customer returns to buy from you, the more likely they are to keep buying—and the more they'll spend.



Put simply, replenishment order reminders are a strategic way to leverage the contact you’ve already worked so hard to develop.

Milestone emails

The calendar is littered with opportunities to reach out and delight your customers; from birthdays and seasonal events through to order anniversaries.



The calendar is littered with opportunities to reach out and delight your customers; from birthdays and seasonal events through to order anniversaries. Why not reach out and wish your customers a happy birthday, with a relevant birthday promotion, such as a small discount or free shipping?

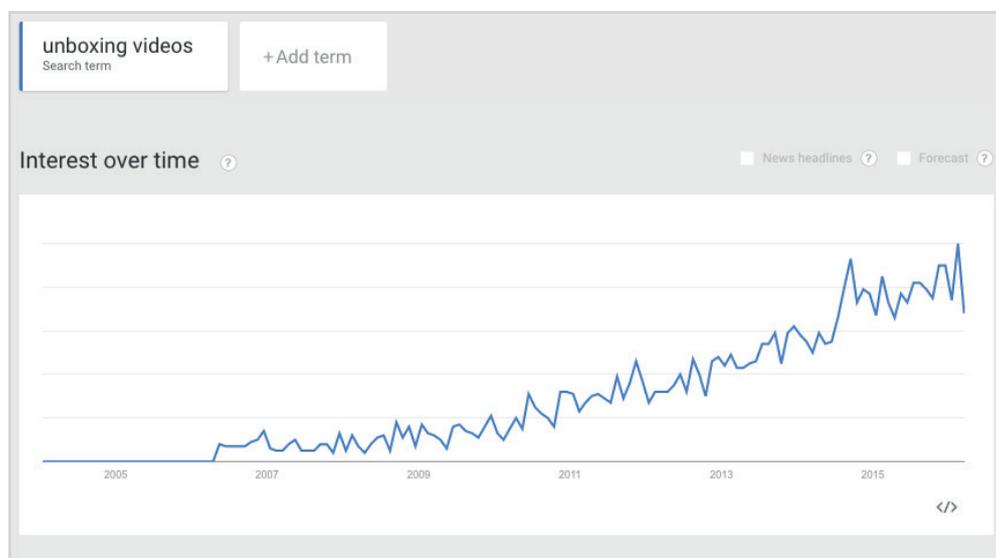
In an age where marketing automation rules, these small, personal touches are a valuable counterpoint. While we're increasingly accustomed to dealing with computers and machines rather than humans, it's always nice to experience a personal touch from our favorite brands.

As a merchant, treating your customers as people and celebrating their landmarks not only delivers a personal touch that can help build loyalty, it also helps foster profitable relationships. It's no secret that emotions play a huge role in making purchase decisions. And we've all been.

Unboxing videos

Unboxing videos are exactly what they sound like: videos your customers record of themselves opening your shipments.

The Google Trends shows how rapidly the term has increased in search volume. On YouTube for the phrase 'unboxing video' returns some 36.7 million results.





The popularity of these videos is two-fold.

For one thing, they offer an unpolished, impartial and honest peek at your product. This is a good way for customers to check exactly what they can expect to receive. The videos also tap into complex psychology—that is, the inherent excitement we feel when opening packages. It’s an emotion that stretches way back to our childlike love of Christmas and birthday gifts.

As the genre has become more and more popular, we’ve seen companies actually start to pay online influencers and popular vloggers to create unboxing videos of their products. You might not want to pay someone to unbox your products, but why not encourage your customers to do so? You might even want to offer free product in exchange for this kind of ultra-valuable user-generated-content.

Go ahead and ask!

According to Texas Tech, 83% of consumers are willing to refer after a positive experience – but only



DELIGHT - SUMMARY (TL;DR)

- Retention is cheaper and more profitable than acquisition. Do not overlook the Delight stage.
- Ask for reviews. Your customers are far better salespeople than you are... so encourage them to provide recommendations and ratings.
- Send out surveys to build a true picture of how customers feel about your service.
- If your product is complex or difficult to use, produce guides, especially in the form of videos. Give your customers the tools they need to get the absolute most out of their purchase.
- Replenishment emails remind your customers they need to place another order. As long as they're timely and targeted, your customers will thank you for them.
- Deliver emails on special occasions to help your customers celebrate milestones in their life...or your relationship with them.
- Ask for referrals! Customers are happy to refer you but rarely don't get round to it. So speak up.

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CONCLUSIONS



There's no doubt that content marketing is on the rise. Customers are doing more research and consuming more content than ever before. **That makes content marketing a dream tool for E-Commerce merchants.**

Becoming a content creator and publisher gives you a direct route to your ideal customers, aligning seamlessly with the buying patterns that naturally follow.

Content is King, Strategy is Queen

In order to be successful, you need to take a structured, analytical approach to the buyer journey. This involves creating relevant, useful, engaging and purposeful content to suit every stage of the purchase process.

It starts with **Attract**: bringing visitors to your store. If you're serious about organic traffic, invest in blogging, guest blogging, infographics, social media and personalization.

Once users have found your store, you need to be pragmatic enough to accept that only a small minority will purchase then and there. **Convert** faceless visitors into real leads with newsletter signups, ebooks, whitepapers and gated content.

Closing leads is not an exact science and there's no silver bullet. But nurturing your leads with email segmentation, automated sequences, season promotions, abandon cart emails, and a regular newsletter strengthens your relationship with them until they're ready to buy.

And do not forget: just because someone gives you money...you're job isn't done. Leave your customers feeling **Delighted**. Current customers are your best source of reoccurring revenue, as well as new revenue through reviews and referrals.

The great thing about content marketing is that, unlike paid advertising, it has an almost unlimited shelf life. Once you've put into place some of the structures we've outlined in this ebook, you've essentially built a marketing machine.

And that machine will continue driving traffic, generating leads, closing and delighting your customers for years to come.

Good luck!



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