

# Content Crusader Programme

**A 4-part Quick Guide to transforming your business  
from Content Maker to Content Crusader**

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# Hello.

I hope you are well.

You've received this document because you've attended one of my workshops, subscribed to my newsletter, or downloaded my slides on developing your Content Crusader Programme.

If you'd like to focus on a specific area or step in developing your content and social strategy and marketing, or simply have any questions regarding the content of this document, please get in touch with me at [timi.alcala@socialbizstrategy.com](mailto:timi.alcala@socialbizstrategy.com). Let's discuss possible directions you can take, scope or next-action steps that can work for you. In my experience, one-on-one or team in-depth sessions on customer persona development and content roadmap / editorial planning has provided the most business value for my clients and network.

For regular updates on content marketing, social technologies, digital marketing, design thinking, and entrepreneurship, [subscribe to my blog](#) or connect with me on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), or [LinkedIn](#). I'm developing handy resources on content and digital marketing, so I hope you stay connected.

If you re-use the content of this document for your work, I'd appreciate proper attribution. Please mention my name and link to my blog. <http://SocialBizStrategy.com>

May your quest be wondrous, Content Crusader!

- Timi



THE CONTENT CRUSADER'S QUEST

# Elevate people to greater heights

The smartest way to attract our ideal audience and nurture communities is to master the creation and distribution of content that genuinely helps people. For this quest we'll need a strategy, a system, and a lot of courage. If you'll bring courage, I'll bring the strategy and system.

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## About this document

### Who is this document for?

It's for those reviewing their content strategy and marketing, want to reboot their efforts, or just want to take small but concrete first steps towards becoming a Content Crusader but also quickly learn from the process.

### What's in it for you?

The templates, guidelines, and checklists in this document provide you concrete first steps towards strategic content creation. It provides focus and purpose so you can clearly map your content development efforts with your business and marketing objectives. Taken together, these steps help you become bigger and strategic with content by starting small but focused. The aim is for you to implement your ideas quicker, test them, and thus learn faster together with your target group.

### How can you get the most from the information in this document?

The reason I bundled these templates together is that they provide the most value when used to complement each other. Whilst they are individually useful, they will have the most impact if undertaken within the larger process of content strategy and planning. These templates and their inherent process is almost the same approach I take with my own clients and organisations.

1. Begin with the basics: your brand identity, value proposition, and your customer personas. Are they all aligned and do they complement (instead of contradicting) each other? Your content strategy and content marketing is highly dependent on how solid your business foundations are.
2. Develop your customer personas. If there's anything you should first invest your resources in, it should be on getting to know your customers well. Why pay for campaigns, ad, or other promotional materials for people you can't really say you know that well?
3. With the input from the first two activities, you can now embark on your quest as Content Crusader. Identify what you want to achieve, do a content audit and see how you can be better with matching the right type of content that will help ease your personas' pain or create more wow-moments for them.
4. Dive into details and be more concrete by creating a content roadmap for your target group. Review their decision-making journey and see what the information gaps are for each stage, decide what your content focus should be, and select the themes you can explore and develop that will support your business and solve their problems.

## The case for becoming a Content Crusader

The future of marketing and content go beyond selling: it's about media resources, shared value, and communities. Without content – without meaningful and compelling content – we will lose the ability to connect, engage, and build longer lasting relationships with the people that matter to our work and organization.

A Content Crusader is skilled in making content and a master in delivering consistently valuable information resources to people. Doing so enables your business to achieve most marketing and branding objectives. You can integrate your character as Content Crusader in your larger brand identity and it can help enrich your value proposition. It's one of the best ways to build your ideal audience and gain competitive advantage or maintain brand preference.

Why do we all need to advance from Content Maker to Content Crusader? The inconvenient truth is that customers don't care about our products, because they care more about their own problems. Trying to grab their attention with the usual content that proliferates the Web such as sales pitches and traditional advertising will cost more resources but deliver less conversion. The smarter way to gain attention is to provide compelling content that will help our customers be better in the things they love and do. We should make it our business to package our expertise, products, and services into content that meets the information needs of our customers. We should make it our expertise to deliver consistently well-crafted and well-distributed content because this fuels all our other initiatives in search, social, and marketing.

A few more things to consider:

**Content is currency.** It's our ticket to join our audience in their buying journey. Let's create content as if it were a product: treat it like a business asset instead of a marketing cost.

**Time and attention are currency.** People don't care about self-serving content. Let's measure content's business value in how well it solves people's problems or fulfills their needs. Our brand promise when it comes to content must be based on value creation. Content is not an end-in-itself.

**Claim our Content Zone of Authority** -- the niche where we can develop media and resources that combine competency, passion, and utility. This goes beyond getting people to sign up for our newsletter or like our posts. It's about committing ourselves to content that educates -- content that elevates people to reach greater heights. We just don't want to attract an audience; we want to nurture a community.

**Businesses large and small must earn their audience's permission to sell their products.** Creating content solutions for people demonstrate how much we care. This is the honest way of winning people to our side and what drives Content Crusaders.

The barriers to creating and distributing content are so small and few. The real challenge is developing a strategy and system for compelling content that scales. This will turn your marketing from good to outstanding...to meaningful.

## The Basics

Ask yourself and ask others: Does the **promise** you make to **the people who matter** to your business MATCH **who you really are** and **what you actually do**?

### Your company

1. Your vision and mission
2. Your products and / or services
3. Main online presence (website, social, mobile, others)
4. Organisation: who owns / uses content and social media (e.g. marketing, sales, etc.)
5. Who produces what kind of content (in-house, external agency, freelance?)?

### Your unique value proposition

6. What you do best:
7. That helps whom:
8. Overcome what:
9. So that they can gain which benefits:

In short: how can you help others become successful?

### Your customer personas

*See full template below. Some jumpstart questions:*

- Which problem are you helping them solve?
- Which opportunity are you helping them gain?
- How do you translate for each particular persona your unique value proposition?

## Customer personas

A customer persona is so much more than just demographics. It is meant to humanise your target market. It helps you be more effective in crafting your messaging because you get to create and target content that is for someone and not everyone. Done right, it's a powerful guide for writers, designers, creatives, developers, and content strategists to create optimal user experiences, offer the best type of content to the right kind of people, and other such activities that can be performed when you know our customer through and through.

It's an invaluable tool to deliver better work and more actionable insights to the businesses that hire you.

At the very least, a business should have a documented profile of their personas that acts as a tool to define and guide the engagement cycle of your business for your specific market segments.

For example: while your end goal might be customer acquisition, there are many things that happen between first contact and the actual moment of conversion. How your online and social channels respond to users' information needs before conversion will determine whether they do end up buying your product. It's crucial to identify all target users for our online channels, and to segment them according to their motivations, needs and position in the customer journey. Research into these personas can be fed back not just into your social strategy, but also content planning, lead nurturing, website design, branding and product / service development.

I usually use customer persona development to:

- » Sharpen value proposition by making it customer-focused and benefits oriented
- » Guide the development of marketing messages and messaging hierarchy for a product launch or direct response marketing campaign
- » Gain input for brand identity development or brand optimisation
- » Pinpoint potential 'content zone of authority' for a brand
- » Identify relevant themes for the business' content roadmap

Try filling this form by yourself and compare it with the answers from you other colleagues. If you don't know the answer to some of the questions or have doubts, try to do some online research – and better still – just go ask some of your customers.



## Template: Customer Persona Development

[Download this template as a word document](#)

Basic information	
Name	
Female / Male	
Age	
Nationality	
Income	
Profession / Title or Function	
Industry / Field of expertise	E.g. Software, Legal, Education, etc.
Business maturity level	Nascent entrepreneur, Baby business (up to 3.5 years), older business (> 3.5 years), Start-up, Just starting in a new business but already has experience in a business in a different field, etc.
Civil status or Family type	E.g. Single in a relationship, married with young kids, newly married...
Other general information that may be relevant	

Psychographic information	
<b>Major characteristics</b> (esp. in making decisions. E.g. risk-takers or risk-averse)	Introvert or extrovert, values, analytical or more instinctive, risk-averse or risk-taker etc.
<b>Life cycle phase: Personal success</b> (What's their current personal situation on a personal level, challenges, and success goals / top 3 desires?)	E.g. taking relationship to a more serious level, want to spend more time with kids, how to maintain current lifestyle, etc.  Situation: * What personal activities do they engage in? Challenges: Top 3 desires and success goals:
<b>Life cycle phase: Personal fears</b> What keeps them awake at night? What are the top 3 pain points in their personal life?	E.g. Not being good enough like their other siblings, not able to commit to more serious relationships, feeling unsatisfied with accomplishments, identity problems, sense of belonging, etc.
<b>Life cycle phase: Professional success</b> When it comes to work, what is their current situation, what challenges do they face, and what do they want to achieve to be called successful / top 3 desires?	Situation: * What entrepreneurial activities do they engage in? Challenges: Top 3 desires and success goals
<b>Life cycle phase: Professional fears</b> What keeps them awake at night? What are the top 3 pain points in their professional life?	E.g. Work-life balance for example for or working mothers, not innovative enough, fear of pitching or presenting (which can be related to a deeper personal insecurity)
<b>Personal and business influencers</b> Who do they consult when making big decisions? Who do they look up to inform themselves?	
Motto or personal statement / favourite quote	

Socialgraphic information	
<b>Search and information goals</b> Why do they search and consume the content they use?	Personal – Business – E.g. Instant solutions, inspiration, tips, advanced information, de-stress or relax, stay updated
<b>Content use</b> What do they read, watch, listen to, and share?	Personal - Business - E.g. podcasts on personal development, movies, talk shows (local or foreign), comics, etc.
<b>Content influencers</b> Who they turn to for knowledge, to make them smarter, better in what they do?	
<b>Themes / topics</b> Which themes or topics grab their attention?	E.g. How-to information on pitching, tax-related news, competitions, etc.
<b>In which networks do they belong?</b> Social media, groups, online and offline organizations / associations	E.g. LinkedIn Groups, Industry Associations, Trade Fairs, Facebook Online community for moms, online forum for developers, book clubs,

Relationship with the brand	
How much do they know about the product/service you're offering? Is it known or common, or a new thing?	
In general, will they be positive, negative, or neutral about your product/service? Why?	
<b>Deal-breakers:</b> what are their <i>unconscious</i> motivations to resist your product or service?	<i>Note: Price is often a conscious motivation to either reject or desire a product. What we want to uncover is the deeper reason behind people's justification for getting a product or service.</i>
<b>Deal-clinchers:</b> what are their <i>unconscious</i> motivations to desire your product or service?	Same as aforementioned note on motivations

## Content Brand Programme: Quick-start Questions

How do you initiate the shift from simply making content to making content that benefits people and your business? Try going down the road with this 5-step Quick Guide to Starting a Content Crusader Programme. It lists action steps that will shape the formation of a Content-as-Product mindset. You can get cracking on strategic thinking while actually getting things done.

### 1. Start your journey with the end in mind

Write a short, inspiring statement of what your ideal customer relationship will look like in the future.

### 2. Pick a place to start - Start small, but start now

- » What does the business want to achieve in the next 6 months? Think in terms of an urgent need or recognized opportunity). Alternately, you can ask: what's the greatest challenge your business is facing?
- » How do you think content can help support this goal?

### 3. Do a content audit

- » What is your most remarkable piece of content? What makes it remarkable?
- » What is your most disappointing experience with using content? What were the obstacles you had to overcome?
- » Which content is most interesting or relevant for your customers?

### 4. Identify whom do you (really) help

- » Who is your main persona?
- » Which top 3 problems do you help them solve?
- » Which top 3 benefits do you help them gain?

#### ***Dig deeper:***

- » Which information needs of your target audience can you derive based on their problems and desires?
- » On which theme / topic can you become the trusted and leading information authority? (E.g. In which areas can you effectively help your target audience to be successful)?

## 5. End with a promising start

How do you envision content to be a part of this dream outcome?

Challenge: Compose your content brand mission

“I help (persona)  
overcome (which obstacle)  
OR  
achieve (which benefit)  
by providing (what kind of content).”

## Content roadmap: content gaps and opportunities

The opportunity cost of delivering fragmented interfaces, messages, and content is steep: it will distort the public's perception of your brand, and diminish the impact of even the best-crafted tagline or most stunning website. Your audience will demand clarity, consistency, and creativity in your overall user experience on- and offline.

In the table below I've listed the different phases in the customer journey and the associated content gaps and opportunities. This has been adapted from the book, [“eMarketing Strategies for the Complex Sale”](#) by foremost marketing strategist Ardath Albee. If you look at content as a solution, resource, or tool that your customers can use to move forward in their decision-making journey, then you'll start creating content that your target audience actually want to experience and even pay for. As you read through the table, think of these questions:

- » Which content offerings best match the needs of your customer personas at their current place in the customer journey cycle?
- » How will you boost visibility and engagement at all points of choice of your audience?
- » What “triggers” and moves people to search for what you offer? What factors do they use to evaluate and choose?
- » How do your brand marketing and communications match each stage?

Customer journey	Content gap / opportunity
Status quo	<p>They're problem-unaware or solutions-unaware.</p> <p><b>Content focus: The value of change</b>            Make them aware they don't need to deal with limitations and pain points. Show what others are doing and how they have changed. Specifically: introduce concepts, ideas, or themes that cover both your competency and people's needs.</p>
Priority shift	<p>They become interested in educating themselves and researching about how change can fulfil their desires.</p> <p><b>Content focus: The value of (strategic) thinking and the possibilities for change</b>            Make them realise the value of strategic thinking, and introduce them to a direction that they can explore. Create good will and draw positive attention by providing content resources that make your audience better in what they want to do (educational and relevant materials). Focus on (business) value of solving problems / making a change.</p>
Research	<p>They're now focused on resolving their problem and rationalising their decision or building a (business) case. They want to realistically approach this change and back their assumptions with research.</p> <p><b>Content focus: Show your expertise and how you can concretely help</b>            Discuss risks and how to solve them and reinforce the solutions you propose with your expert opinion. Expand their thinking on overlapping issues to help them make better decisions (and to convince them why they should join or take the next action with you</p>
Options	<p>They feel competent about their judgement of your products and services and recognise how these will help them be successful / reach their goals.</p> <p><b>Content focus: Flexibility of choices; success stories,</b>            Show appreciation for their resolve to remedy their situation. Show more success stories. Demonstrate added value and flexible choices.</p>
Steps back (pushback)	<p>You're on their short list but doubt has crept in, new information or changes in their situation now cause hesitation and re-evaluation...or they're experiencing analysis-paralysis.</p> <p><b>Content focus: Concrete, practical answers to objections</b>            FAQ, content that talks about possible objections, and a reminder of the benefits of pursuing the change they want. Testimonials, success stories</p>
Validation	<p>You're on their shortlist but they need to validate their assumptions about you before making the final decision.</p> <p><b>Content focus: Assurance and personal connection</b>            Testimonials, more personal look at people behind your organisation, or who you are associated with it (About us). Social proof and business viability are important. Provide relevant news on website, newsletters. Think of content that brings personal connection to your brand.</p>
Choice and commitment	<p>They're ready to conduct transactions with you: buy, join, pay...</p> <p><b>Content focus: Custom content, functional content</b>            Customer -focused / benefits-centred proposal. Clear terms and conditions, process of joining, benefits, etc. Well-designed sign-up page and payment page that shows the exact process to be undertaken.</p>
Return and loyalty	<p>They're satisfied so far and want to conduct business with you again.</p> <p><b>Content focus: Consistent delivery of educational and targeted content</b>            Compelling content proves you didn't just get lucky with acquiring your first customer. Add exclusive or custom content to your content mix reserved for repeat customers. Create content that also helps you gather customer insights.</p>



## Content roadmap: a template

[Download this template as an Excel file](#)

A Content Roadmap helps you stay relevant in all points of choice of your audience. Based on persona and their information needs, your content authority niche, and business objectives, you should identify the compelling themes and topics throughout the customer's decision-making journey. Pinpoint content gaps and opportunities in each phase so you can better plan which content to develop.

A Content Roadmap only works with a content strategy in place. Jump-start your strategic approach to content by answering the following questions:

- » Do you have a set of themes that can help activate and energise your brand in the next 6 months?
- » For each theme, do you have a good content mix that delivers conversion, or maintain brand favourability and presence in the mind of you target audience?
- » For each theme, can you name 5 specific topics that you can develop into different relevant formats for communication (such as web and print)?

Use the template below as a guide. We all come up with themes and topics in different ways, but this template can help you create a practice of aligning content with business objectives. By deriving the information needs from your customer persona and mapping it to the business objective you want to achieve, you're able to target content that is meaningful both for business and audience.

Check out the example on the next page. This is how the content roadmap can look like for a start-up in the baby food market.

Persona: Julie (35 y.o. project manager, mother of a 2 year old boy)

Decision-making	Problem	Solution	Content / Info	Format	Distribution channels	Dependencies
Unaware	Going back to work means less time to cook fresh food for her toddler. No choices other than to buy baby food in pots or cook fresh even if she's very busy at work.	Let her know another option exists. She can cook fresh food when she's home, but on days when she needs to focus on work, she can just order fresh food for babies online and have it delivered.	<p>&gt; Evergreen* content: Finding the balance between work and motherhood</p> <p>&gt; Pre-planned content: Information on the launch of the product and the benefits for the working mom,</p>	<p>Work-motherhood balance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- magazine article, online article for the product website</li> </ul> <p>Intro / Launch:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-video explaining what the product is about /</li> <li>- Facebook ads offering free trial in exchange for product review</li> <li>- Facebook contest about 'Food story' for babies</li> </ul>	<p>Parenthood / women magazine blog and magazine</p> <p>Facebook, Twitter, Blog, other blogs</p>	<p>A special <b>landing page</b> on the website with information on how to avail of the free trial.</p> <p><b>A form on the landing page</b> for people to leave their contact details</p> <p>Possibly, a special page on Facebook containing the same information on free trial as on the website</p>

<b>Social Sense: Content Roadmap</b>		
Persona		
Stage in customer journey		
Status quo   Priority shift   Research   Options   Pushback   Validation   Choice and commitment   Repeat / Loyalty		
Problem	Information need	
Content Themes	Topics	Format and Channels
Notes		