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SaaS Content Marketing

A Complete Guide

By **Chandal Nolasco da Silva**

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Introduction

Content marketing is effective in any industry. But for software-as-a-service (SaaS) companies, your strategy may differ from other verticals.

In 2019, marketing professional Emily Byford updated her earlier research on the state of SaaS content marketing using websites from the Montclare SaaS 250 as the basis for her analysis.

Among her findings, Byford identified that:

- Just 4% of SaaS blogs receive more than 100,000 visits from organic search each month.
- 23% of SaaS blogs receive fewer than 500 organic visits per month.
- The average SaaS blog receives 1800 organic search visits per month.

As you can see, the gap between low and top performers – and even the average and top performers – is massive.

While we haven't seen a more comprehensive study since Byford's update, this is a trend marketers are experiencing in many verticals – and it's growing.

As Google continues to update its algorithms in pursuit of the best answers to every query, the bar for content relevance and quality rises ever higher.

Average content begets average results; it takes exceptional content to ascend to the top of the search engine results pages (SERPs) for your most competitive, high-value keywords.

In this guide, you'll learn how SaaS companies achieve their objectives with an effective content strategy, with sections on:

- Understanding Your SaaS Customer
- The Best Channels For Saas Content Marketing
- Content Processes And Cadence
- Creating Content For SaaS Companies
- SaaS Content Marketing Ideas

These tips, techniques, and examples are based on what it takes to succeed in competitive SaaS markets. You'll find links to more helpful resources and recommended reading throughout.

To your success in search!

What Does Content Marketing Mean For SaaS Companies?

The practice of content marketing is defined as follows:

> **Content marketing is the proven practice of generating interest in a business and its products/services by creating value for customers through engaging and informative content.**

As a marketing practice that spans traditional and digital channels, content marketing is an integral component of any successful marketing organization.

The profitable customer action that a SaaS company is trying to achieve could range from brand awareness to engagement, lead generation, customer retention, and more.

The ways to achieve these results depend on the target audience's behavior.

The content marketing strategy for a SaaS company will therefore depend primarily on its goal and audience.

SaaS companies worldwide tend to prioritize the following two goals:

- New customer acquisition
- Existing customer retention

We'll circle back to these popular goals later.

First, let's dive into these proven SaaS content marketing frameworks, strategies, and examples.

1. Understanding Your SaaS Customer

SaaS companies have unique challenges compared to other company types when it comes to connecting with their audience through content.

For example, software as a service is by definition a service that is provided online, so SaaS marketers have to lead customers towards this conversion point, as opposed to in-store purchases, an in-person business meeting, or another type of conversion experience.

A SaaS company could be serving either customers or businesses. Netflix, Spotify, and Canva are all popular examples of B2C SaaS companies.

B2B SaaS companies range from marketing software services to financial software services and everything in between.

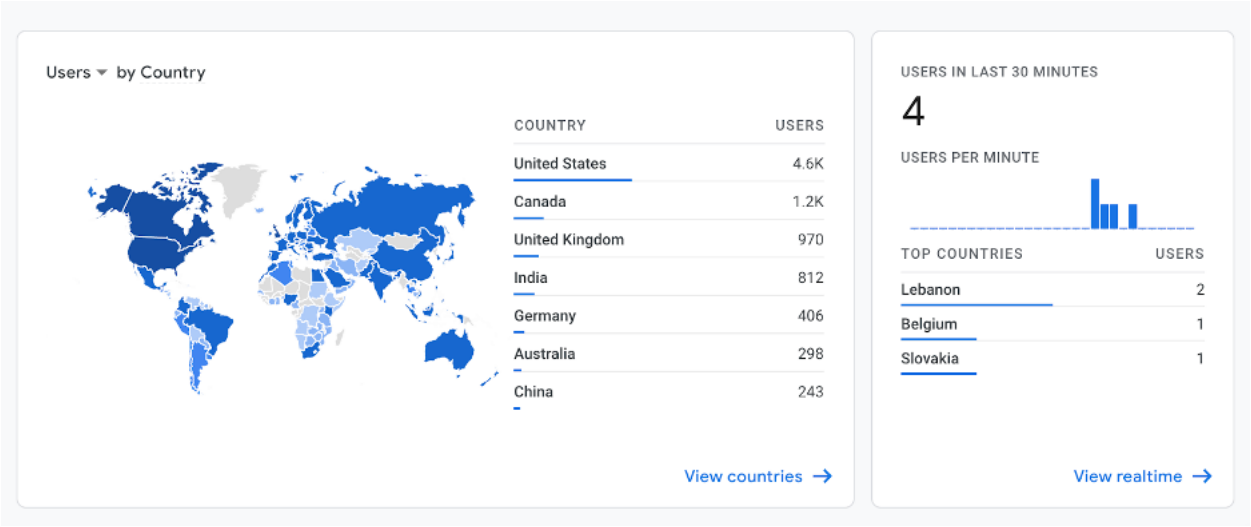
Within the B2C market, there are both economical products and luxury products, just like B2B companies can serve small businesses, medium-sized businesses, or large enterprises.

The content strategy of a SaaS company will vary drastically depending on these different audience parameters.

Recommended Reading

- 4 Actionable Strategies For Using Audience Insights Tools, Michelle Morgan
- How 3 Different Enterprise SaaS Content Strategies Work, Dan Taylor
- What Is A Content Marketing Matrix & Do We Need One? Greg Jarboe

Similarly, the audience location – whether worldwide or hyperlocal – is a key factor, as well.



Screenshot from Google Analytics, January 2022

Consider that the content marketing strategy for a global streaming service like Netflix would be entirely different from that of a delivery company that only operates in a handful of major U.S. cities.

Once a SaaS marketer defines their company's goal and establishes what type of customers they're trying to serve and where they're located, they can define who their audience is. Armed with this information, they can dig into the audience's behavior and preferences.

These are the keys to a good content marketing strategy for any company.

SaaS marketers should seek to answer the following questions about their audience:

- **What is your audience's problem** or objective?
- **How does your SaaS product help them** with that problem or objective?
- **How do they find your business** or solutions like yours?
- **What does the audience search for** on the internet? What do they search for when they visit your website?
- **What was the single best piece of content with the most social shares and the most traffic?** Why do you think this piece resonated so well with your audience? What other pieces of content worked and why?

Pro Tip

If you don't have enough content to answer those last questions, answer them for your biggest competitor instead.

Answering these types of questions will help SaaS marketers to understand their audience's behavior and which types of existing content assets are working for them.

The idea is to create more of the content types that are working and understand new opportunities to create content and connect with the audience.

Audience behavioral trends can be determined using:

- Market research
- Competitor research
- Keyword research
- Google Analytics (GA) data
- Other types of performance analytics systems such as in-app analytics, social media platform analytics, aggregate content monitoring tools, etc.

Using systems like Google Analytics, SaaS marketers can understand which pieces of content get the most traffic, which have the longest time on page, the lowest bounce rate, and – with goals set up in GA – the top converting pages.

GA can also identify the age, location, device type, and more of members of a website's audience. These types of demographic indicators shed light on the preferences of an existing audience.

For example, if a SaaS company looks in GA and finds that its website is serving mostly professionals who are 35 and above, they may decide to focus on developing a top and mid-funnel presence with content marketing on LinkedIn. This social media channel draws an audience of professionals who tend to be above that age bracket.

Pro Tip

When analyzing an audience for the first time in a tool like Google Analytics, choose the largest sample window possible to bolster your statistical significance.

If the company is well established and has changed drastically over its lifetime (such as Microsoft, for example), take a two-year sample window to analyze only what's relevant and working for the brand most recently.

Resample the audience around the same time every year afterward to see how the audience has evolved, how they've engaged with your most-recent content, and what you can iterate on from your previous strategy.

Take note of seasonal fluctuations in performance.

Building A SaaS Funnel With Behavioral Insights

Building a SaaS funnel with content marketing begins with how customers behave.

Over time, SaaS content marketers can develop a deeper understanding of their audience at different stages of the funnel by answering questions like:

- **Top Funnel:** Where does my audience learn about new SaaS solutions like mine (online ads, LinkedIn, conferences, online content, etc.)?
- **Bottom Funnel:** How does our audience compare different solutions (third-party review sites, customer testimonials, case studies, free trials, etc.)?
- **Funnel Expansion:** What keeps them loyal to the tools they use (pricing, customer service, milestone rewards, email recognition, etc.)?

To answer these questions, lean on past marketing data and customer data logs or interviews as much as possible.

Competitor research is helpful for new companies that lack data (in these cases identify channel engagement trends from the most successful competitors).

Answering all of the questions about your audience above will create a powerful blueprint for future content.

Armed with this data, SaaS marketers emulate what's working and ensure that their content has the highest chances of success.

Recommended Reading

- Why Top Of Funnel Matters & How To Win Buy-In For It, Justin Lugbill
- Content KPIs To Define Success At Every Stage Of The Funnel, Brie Anderson
- The Anatomy Of A Powerful Content Marketing Funnel, Semrush

2. The Best Channels For SaaS Content Marketing

In content marketing, audience research will determine the channels your SaaS marketers will use.

After looking through your own content analytics, customer data, and competitor research, you should have an understanding of which channels will work best for your SaaS brand.

Here's a peek at some of the top channels that have worked for SaaS marketing teams I've led at different stages of the funnel:

Image created by author, January 2022

Let's look at a few of these channels in closer detail.

SEO & Blog Articles

Search engine optimization is great for brand awareness at the top of the funnel.

Creating highly optimized content for high-volume queries is extremely effective, but we'll get back to that later in the guide.

Over time, as your brand gains popularity, your audience may start searching for branded phrases suggesting they're lower in the funnel; for example: "[your brand name] reviews."

SaaS companies can optimize for branded search and should be ready to create optimized content to attract searchers at every stage of the funnel.

In fact, Andy Crestodina encourages SaaS content marketers to start at the bottom of the funnel and focus on core page performance to capture leads effectively before creating content to gather more traffic, explaining it's like having a leaky bucket and saying "I just need more water."

It's true that content marketers want as many eyeballs on their content as possible, so blogging is typically most successful when paired with search engine optimization.

However, since SaaS companies are trying to get customers to use their technology online, their funnel may start and end on their website.

For example, a customer may be attracted to a brand based on a Google search that leads to a blog article about a popular topic.

That same blog may also have articles about the company's product providing education about its benefits plus call-to-action boxes that can generate conversions from popular content pages.

It could also include low-funnel content, like case studies, and show preview boxes for this content on higher funnel pages. The point is to create content for every stage of the funnel, starting with the bottom first.

Then when you're ready to create high-volume, top-funnel content that's relevant to your audience, make sure to create clear conversion pathways to the goals you're trying to achieve, without being off-putting.

Recommended Reading

- Study Finds 60% Of SaaS Blogs Are No Longer Unique, Rebekah Dunne
- Content As A Google Ranking Factor: What You Need to Know, Miranda Miller
- SEO Basics For SaaS Companies, Dan Taylor

Conferences

Conferences provide a creative opportunity for SaaS marketers to make a deeper connection with their audience.

Whether online or in-person, your brand can increase visibility with its unique audience at industry-specific events. For example, a building technology product could attend a builder's expo or home show.

As the Content Director at a building technology company, I wanted to help our brand stand out at the home renovation show we were attending. We hired massage professionals for our booth to help relieve the tired backs and sore muscles of the contractors we were trying to connect with.

And when I was the Content Director at a martech company that makes PPC technology, we became a gold sponsor for Hero Conf London, a popular conference that was well-attended by our European audience segment.

To really stand out, we brought a robot on stage for our interactive session presentation about machine learning, had a "PPSea-Breeze" signature cocktail at our reception, and made "PPC-ad libs" activities on all of the cocktail napkins that, when shared on social media with our dedicated hashtag and handle, led to prizes.

There is no limit to the creativity you can inject into in-person events beyond what your budget permits.

Recommended Reading

- SaaS Marketing: How To Get More Quality Leads For Your Brand, Brent Csutoras
- LinkedIn Makes Virtual Events Easier To Find, Matt Southern

If a SaaS company can create a large enough presence, conferences are a great way to increase brand awareness; however, they can also help gather leads.

SaaS companies can nurture conference leads after the event with other channels like email marketing. Why not send leads to your most popular articles, case studies, etc. so they can continue to understand how great your SaaS company is?

Other types of follow-up activities, like exclusive discounts to attendees, can help SaaS sales teams convert these leads.

Third-Party Review Sites

Third-party review sites are a key playground for SaaS companies to convince leads who are closer to the bottom of the funnel.

While non-SaaS products tend to rely on Google reviews, reviews on social media profiles, app reviews, or even industry-specific review websites, there are a handful of review websites dedicated to technology.

SaaS marketers have to monitor and maintain their profiles on these websites that are ultimately out of their control. As I stated in a recent article about Google on third-party reviews:

> **Google reminds businesses that there is no way to opt-out of third-party reviews, and they need to take up any issues with third-party site owners."**

Look at the average reviews of your competitors on third-party sites to understand the bar or threshold you should aim for in these channels.

These can be the KPIs in your strategy and help inform your team's OKRs.

For example, reaching a 4.5 average review rating across all active third-party review sites could be a goal your SaaS team is aiming for.

Some popular third-party review sites that SaaS companies should build a profile on include G2, Capterra, and Trust Pilot.

SaaS marketers can even run paid review campaigns with these websites targeting their most engaged audience segments, which can help with funnel expansion by supporting customer retention.

This worked well in a SaaS content marketing campaign I was part of in the past.

We sent out a survey in collaboration with our third-party review partner just before the end of the year to our most engaged customers, with a generous Amazon gift certificate.

We asked participants about their experience with our product, and to leave us a review.

Then we took any that seemed in danger of churning and offered a discount for early renewal on their annual subscription, in addition to sending them some swag and getting their account manager to book a meeting with them for further feedback.

It worked well, generating great customer feedback, boosting sales, and identifying customers in danger of churning in the process so we could enact measures to prevent it.

This type of content initiative would be appropriate for any SaaS company that's trying to improve customer retention, and/or boost sales numbers before the end of the year.

Recommended Reading

- 5 Ways To Boost Your SEO With Third-Party Reviews, Marshall Nyman
- Where & How To Get The Right Reviews For Your Business, Pratik Dholakiya
- A Guide To Star Ratings On Google And How They Work, Chandal Nolasco da Silva

Other Channels

There are so many channels that SaaS marketers can leverage to meet their goals, whatever they may be.

B2C SaaS companies could develop brand recognition through broad consumer awareness channels like TV, social media, and radio.

B2B SaaS companies may find that YouTube tutorials and webinars are very effective at moving leads towards conversions.

There are so many different marketing channels available that each specific SaaS company must look closely at where their audience is present and engaged to avoid spreading themselves too thin.

At the end of the day, all other channels should lead to the SaaS company's website or the app store, where converted leads can sign up for the SaaS product or app being promoted.

It is for this reason that, again, it's key for SaaS companies to optimize their core website page for their brand name, and typically that's done on the homepage.

So at this point in the strategy process, SaaS marketers should have the following established:

- **A goal:** What is the SaaS company trying to achieve?
- **A defined audience:** Who does the company speak to? How do they behave? What do they like?
- **A list of channels by funnel stage:** What are the most effective channels to create content on?

With these building blocks in place, it's time to start thinking about creating some content!

Recommended Reading

- YouTube Introduces 'Typical Audience Retention' Data, Matt Southern
- PPC For SaaS Marketing: 6 Proven Ways To Use Paid Search, Tim Jensen
- SaaS Marketers: The Paid Social Approach That Works For You, Heather Campbell

3. Content Processes And Cadence

Content marketers must be able to create content consistently using a defined process in order to build and retain their audience.

As part of the strategic blueprint, they should seek to develop the best story themes, content types, voice and tone, editorial guidelines, and publishing frequency.

Developing SaaS Content Themes

Content themes should be broad and speak to the interests of the SaaS company, the needs of the audience, and what's interesting to read about.

Themes should be simple, applicable at all stages of the funnel, and able to stand the test of time. Aim to create a maximum of five main themes.

For example, a lifestyle SaaS product may find that productivity is a good theme for their brand.

Since SaaS products are often paid for on a monthly or annual subscription basis, SaaS marketers have to justify the benefits of these ongoing costs, and so price typically becomes a theme of some sort.

Similarly, SaaS products are often created to help end-users be more productive, and in turn, end-users are able to do more with their time, like growing their business.

It is for this reason that scalability also comes up often as a theme for SaaS companies.

Again, since SaaS represents technology products sold online, end-users will also want to know how easy it is for them to use; and therefore, functionality and ease-of-use also appear frequently in theme development.

I typically build audience personas based on the research from previous sections, and with these personas, I group the needs of each by audience type, then I plot everything with a color-coded analysis and surface patterns from my audience's needs.

Another example comes from B2B freight company, Intek, who focuses on the following themes in their articles, videos, and ebooks:

- **Cost:** What To Know & Reasons Why Prices Vary By Provider
- **Problems:** Pros & Cons Of Using Truckload For Your Company's Shipments
- **Comparisons:** The Differences Between Freight Broker Vs. Freight Agent
- **Bests:** 2021 Best Truckload Companies (And How To Choose)
- **Reviews**

As SaaS companies go about creating content for their brand, they will be brainstorming within the themes they develop.

This will help to ensure that every topic they write about is relevant to their audience.

(Be careful to create only one article about each specific topic and keyword! Update it as needed).

Recommended Reading

- Storytelling In A COVID-19 World: How Your Brand Story Can Set You Apart, Jenise Uehara Henrikson
- Customer Personas Can Transform SEO, PPC, And Content Marketing, Greg Jarboe
- How To Use Website Traffic Analysis For Persona Development, Adam Heitzman

Developing SaaS Content Types

SaaS marketers also have to think about content types, which refer to the medium and format of the content. Content types tend to vary by goal.

For example, if the goal of the content strategy is to generate awareness about a B2B SaaS company they could focus on the following content types:

- Articles
- Quizzes
- Infographics
- Trend Reports
- Press Releases

These content types will make a rational connection with their audience.

B2C SaaS companies may focus on making more of an emotional connection with their audience to generate brand awareness using the following content types:

- Games
- Branded Videos
- Viral Influencer Campaigns
- Competitions
- Articles

If the goal of the SaaS company is conversions and sales, the content strategy should weigh their content production towards lower-funnel content types like case studies, datasheets, pricing guides, interactive demonstrations, and ratings/reviews.

Again, though content marketing teams will be creating content for all stages of the funnel, it's the proportion of content they create for each that will change depending on the goal (and as you can see above there are many different story types to choose from).

SaaS companies that have lots of existing content to analyze should already be able to determine which content formats are most engaging to their audience.

Even just within the article format, there are listicles, interviews, roundups, and more that SaaS marketers may be able to identify as types that work with their audience.

SaaS marketers should also create content about topics that are "evergreen" in addition to as-it-happens topics.

With all of these possible formats and types, SaaS marketers have no shortage of content they can brainstorm.

Whatever has worked in the past should be prioritized in the future, while still leaving room to experiment with new content types, and taking care to not saturate the audience with any one type or another.

Recommended Reading

- 5 Top Influencer Marketing Tools To Find The Most Influential People, Brent Csutoras
- 9 Emotional Hooks That Will Make Your Content 10x Better, Adam Heitzman

Developing SaaS Content Voice, Tone, And Editorial Guidelines

In the process of consistent storytelling, every editorial team has to consider the voice and tone that will make the most sense for their audience, and apply it with editorial guidelines. Semrush defines voice and tone as follows:

"Voice is a set of consistent characteristics that define who you are as a brand.

...Your company's voice is your personality and should reflect your core values.

Tone, on the other hand, is how you express your voice. It can and will change, based on how you would speak in certain situations."

A brand's voice almost reflects how it acts rather than how it speaks, even though that seems counterintuitive. By getting to know their audience, SaaS brands can determine what type of voice would appeal to them.

Is it boisterous and loud? Is it conservative, and reserved?
Is it youthful or experienced?

A brand's tone would change depending on the content format and its context.

An email may have a more personal tone, while one with a last-minute deal may have more of a sense of urgency.

A product fact sheet, on the other hand, should be more clear and direct.

While tone can and should change depending on which piece of content it's being applied to, it can still have general guidelines, like always remaining positive or upbeat.

Editorial guidelines also play a role in providing structured content with consistent formatting that speaks to your audience's preferences.

For example, if your SaaS brand serves North American clients, but most of them are actually in Canada, your editorial guidelines should stipulate that your content should use British English.

Editorial guidelines can also define the writing style, expected word count, image use, citation style, and so on.

When all is said and done, SaaS content managers and creators have to put it all together on an editorial calendar and bring all of this carefully planned content to life.

Campaign planning for larger formats of content like conferences, ebooks, or webinars needs more time and likely a brief, while a list of topics to be written on the blog should remain ever-present.

Create a schedule that meets all of your strategic content marketing needs with the resources you have available to your team.

If you have a small team and budget, there is only so much content you'll be able to create so make each piece as effective as possible!

Pro Tip

Look for opportunities for repurposing content across your content calendar.

In terms of frequency, do some competitor research to inform your content cadence.

Look at how often competitors are posting on their blog or social media to understand what's working best for them.

Is their audience being saturated with too many posts and not engaging with them, or does every daily post get thousands of likes?

Recommended Reading

- How To Manage A Data-Driven Content Marketing Calender, Jeff Riddall
- Content Guidelines: Why Your Brand Needs A Style Guide, Anna Crowe
- Perfecting Your Brand's Tone Of Voice For SEO Copywriting, Julia McCoy

4. Creating Content For SaaS Companies

With your SaaS content marketing blueprint in hand, you're finally ready to start writing... or even filming!

It all depends on what your audience prefers.

You can start brainstorming using the parameters developed in your content strategy including themes, content types, and data about topics that worked well for you in the past. Or, find what worked well for competitors using tools like Buzzsumo.

You can also use keyword research tools to create a list of relevant long-tail queries to write about. For lower-funnel content, use your sales team to figure out all of the top questions being asked by prospects, and then answer these questions with content outright.

If you're stumped for content topics, try using the Answer the Public tool to get a list of all questions asked about a particular topic on Bing.

While queries with high volume are great for SaaS companies to write about, they should consider that the topic has likely already been covered.

In fact, one study found that 60% of SaaS blog content appears elsewhere online. Writing for popular search t erms is what everyone is doing, and your content has to be ridiculously in-depth to compete in these "Hunger Games" of Google SERPS.

Look at what articles are ranking first for the keyword you're targeting in an incognito window. Then analyze the first couple of pages to understand the depth/breadth needed for these pieces to rank so well on Google.

You can use AI-enabled tools such as Frase, MarketMuse, or InLinks to automate some of this research, as well.

Then apply what you've learned to the content you're creating.

With each of your topics, be sure you're adding a unique voice to the conversation and contributing to the discussion to drive it forward, rather than just regurgitating what others have already said.

Remember, you should create content for every stage of the funnel. Lower-funnel pieces like case studies don't have to be as in-depth because you're likely not competing for them to rank on search engines.

Pro Tip

> SaaS marketers can get more amplification of their content by finding other complementary SaaS companies that are also beneficial to their users, collaborating on campaigns with them, and then co-promoting the content.
>
> By following the guidelines above, SaaS content marketers should be able to create an annual content strategy for their brand.

Working With Content Creators

Whether you use an agency or build your own in-house content creation team, the creative process may see your brand collaborating with content writers, copywriters, editors, videographers, video editors, photographers, brand ambassadors or influencers, and more.

If you plan to hire and work with writers yourself, you'll definitely want to read Ron Lieback's 'Managing Freelance Writers: How To Find, Train & Retain Top Talent.' There, you'll find plenty of tips on freelance agreements, setting expectations and deadlines, and more for successful engagements.

Kristen Vaughn shared a great resource recently, as well, this one on the specific questions you should ask prospective content agencies to ensure you find the right fit, should you decide to go that route.

Measuring What Matters

Understanding the audience allows any marketer to effectively communicate with them. Gathering data from multiple sources available as your ramp up will shed light on the most effective parameters to inform future content.

As the foundation of the strategy, the audience analysis will drive the best content marketing channels, the best content types, formats, voice, and even the frequency.

All of this culminates in a living editorial calendar that dictates how the strategy will be executed by the SaaS marketing team's resources... and then the real fun begins.

As you go about creating an effective content strategy for your SaaS company, remember what's unique about your product/service compared to your competitors.

Be as creative as possible with every piece of content and campaign you create, and finally, be ready to innovate on your strategy by measuring the results of your content marketing regularly.

And with that I'll leave you with a few more helpful resources you can use to improve your content marketing measurement, then feed those insights back into your planning for the most effective possible content.

Recommended Reading

- How To Measure Content Marketing Success Using Google Data Studio, Kayle Larkin
- Top 13 SEO Metrics To Track Content Performance & Engagement, James Brockbank
- 4 Ways To Use Cross-Channel Insights In Digital Marketing, Josh McCoy

About The Author

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Chandal is an expert content marketing consultant with a decade of digital success behind her.
She is currently working as the VP of Marketing and Communications for Mako Fintech, an emerging startup in Montreal.

Formerly working as Content Director for enterprise brands as well as agencies, Chandal has executed content strategies for juggernaut clients on a local and international scale. She contributes to some of the highest authority marketing publications, is a three-time Landy Award nominee, and was recently listed as one of the top female marketers to follow.

MarketMuse is a content intelligence platform that sets the standard for content quality. Our AI-powered platform increases your organic presence, improves productivity, and drives revenue.

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