

“Albee shows how smart business-to-business marketers learn about buyers, tell a story, and greatly influence the B2B lead-to-sale process. This is your guide for Web marketing success.”

—David Meerman Scott, bestselling author of
The New Rules of Marketing and PR and *World Wide Rave*

eMARKETING STRATEGIES FOR THE COMPLEX SALE

Differentiate Yourself with Attraction Marketing

•
Create Contagious Content

•
Drive Qualified Leads to Sales

.....
ARDATH ALBEE

eMARKETING STRATEGIES FOR THE COMPLEX SALE

ARDATH ALBEE



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Praise for *eMarketing Strategies for the Complex Sale*:

"It used to be so darned easy: Do a few tradeshows, maybe publish a white paper or two, and have the salespeople follow-up. But the always on, YouTube-infested, Twitter-centric world makes the B2B sale much more complex today. Ardath Albee shows how smart business-to-business marketers learn about buyers, tell a story, and greatly influence the B2B lead-to-sale process, driving significant new business as a result. If you manage a complex sales process, stop making excuses! *eMarketing Strategies for the Complex Sale* is your guide for Web marketing success."

- David Meerman Scott, bestselling author of
The New Rules of Marketing & PR and
WorldWide Rave

"In her outstanding book, Ardath Albee outlines a step-by-step process to help any business successfully engage their online customers and prospects. Her book is packed full with examples of how others have successfully attracted high-value prospects using creative online marketing tactics. If your business sells complex products or services, *eMarketing Strategies for the Complex Sale* is your guide book to attracting valuable prospects and speeding the sales cycle."

- Michael A. Stelzner, Author of, *Writing White Papers: How to Capture Readers and Keep Them Engaged*

"If you're looking for 'eMarketing for Dummies' keep looking. This is not a simplistic overview. If you're looking for a comprehensive, well-researched, single resource to plan, build, execute and succeed in your eMarketing efforts, then buy this book! Ardath Albee knows her stuff and has packed it all into this dense but readable and usable text."

- Barry Trailer, Founding Partner, CSO Insights

New media, content marketing, social networking . . . Ardath cleverly wraps these concepts in a bow and makes this book required reading. We are definitely not in Kansas anymore, so hold on to this book for dear life. If you do, you'll learn that it's not selling harder, it's selling smarter. Become the expert resource for your customer and watch your business grow.

-Joe Pulizzi, coauthor of *Get Content Get Customers*,
and founder of Junta42

eMarketing Strategies for the Complex Sale is available online and in bookstores.

Visit the Book Website: <http://www.emarketingstrategiesbook.com>

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Chapter 8

Construct a Framework for Content Strategy Execution

You've gotten to know your prospects and the problems they're trying to solve, and you've mapped out your content plan. Now it's time to create a framework for how your storyline will flow from your company to the various places your prospects spend their time online. Figure 8.1 shows examples of the components this framework might include, with each one reaching farther out into your prospect community. A healthy level of diversification will improve your eMarketing results by giving your content a presence in the channels used by your prospects.

Disseminating your content across a variety of online channels will help to ensure that a prospect need not exist within your marketing database to be attracted by your natural nurturing programs. Since buyers are not identifying themselves early in the process, you need to proactively position yourself to be found. Research has shown that buyers will search out and read more information by a vendor when the information they are exposed to by that vendor is considered to be valuable and relevant. When content is found to be disappointing, it is because it was not problem-to-solution-focused.¹ These findings emphasize the importance of putting high-quality content into play in a variety of channels to increase demand generation. For example, this is done by connecting related content via hyperlinks, inviting

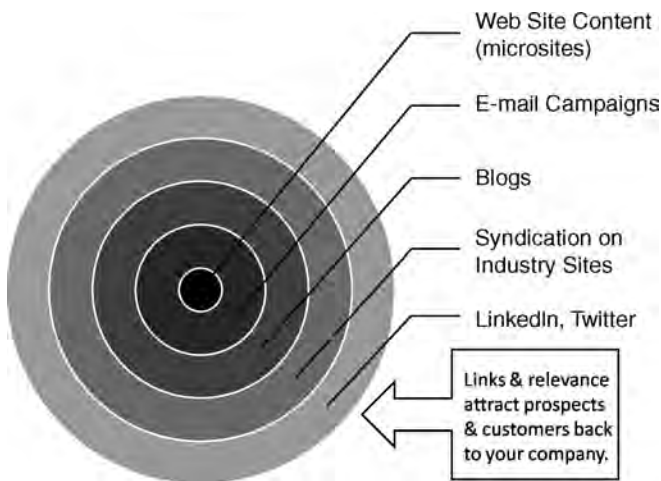


Figure 8.1 Content flows outward to engage prospects and customers.

newsletter subscriptions or opt-ins for related information, and distributing educational content via publisher Web sites where buyers often begin their research.

Buyers have ranked search engines as their single most important information source. By optimizing all their content for keyword and longer-tail search results, marketers increase their chances of being found when buyers start looking. But don't overlook the value you can derive from a consistent e-newsletter program. Prospects indicate that e-newsletters frequently influence their decision to actively search for a solution to their problems.

ASSEMBLE A NATURAL-NURTURING TRACK

The secret to constructing an eMarketing track for a persona is to orient the persona to a problem-to-solution scenario. If you're just beginning to construct nurturing tracks and have no insights into your prospect's interests, consider testing to gauge response levels. Begin with the problem-to-solution scenario that's been most successful for your company. It's likely you have happy customers willing to talk with you, salespeople who know how to sell that product, and a good idea of the urgency level within the industry.

STEPS TO ASSEMBLY

The following steps will help you to create a nurturing track:

1. Select a persona. (If you have a buyer synopsis, skip step 2.)
2. Choose a problem-to-solution scenario.
3. Map related content topics to the buying journey from status quo through choice.
4. Develop the content series from the topics you've mapped.
5. Determine content types, and add those specifics to the map.
6. Select content-delivery options for each content resource in your plan.

As you create greater integration, or connectedness, you will increase your exposure and attraction proportionately. Figure 8.2 provides an example of executing a step of your nurturing track.

Execution of the first step in your nurturing track, as shown in Figure 8.2, includes the following actions:

- The status-quo educational article on topic x will be posted on the problem-to-solution microsite.
- The corporate Web site will feature a description and link to the microsite article.
- E-mail message number 1 will be sent to the appropriate segmented prospect list with a link back to the article.
- The send will coincide with a blog post on the topic that also includes a link back to the article on the microsite.
- In addition to the article, an offer to opt-in for the related series of content will be featured in a sidebar.
- We'll also post a related question about the topic on LinkedIn with a link back to the article and evaluate answers for extensional blog posts and related articles to expand coverage of the topic and additional exposure for the microsite.

In this example, a microsite serves as the hub for the nurturing track. As you add more content with each step, the resources provide a rich educational environment for your prospects who are interested in resolving the featured issue. The storyline is built with each step,

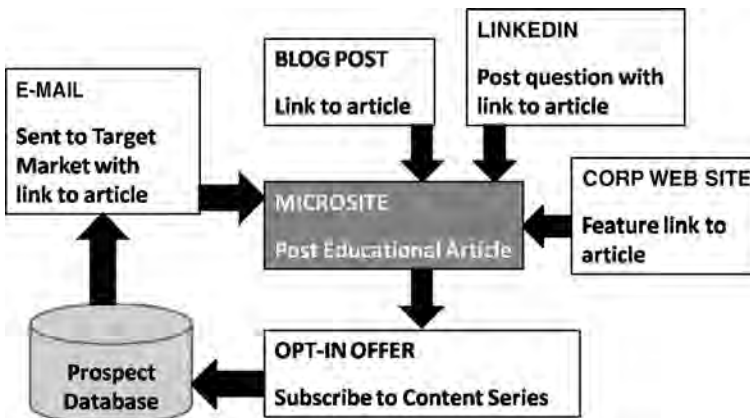


Figure 8.2 Nurturing steps in execution.

pulling prospects forward in their buying process while building a trusted relationship along the way. Natural nurturing empowers marketers to nurture known prospects and generate new demand at the same time.

SYNDICATION EXPANDS NURTURING REACH

Drive increased exposure that draws added traffic to your Web properties and results in additional demand generation through syndication. Syndicating your content means enabling it to spread in reach across the Internet. With opt-in being the best method for growing prospect databases, customer-focused content can be put to work externally, helping to attract new audiences.

You've got several options when it comes to syndicating your nurturing content, but the most common is a Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feed. RSS feeds allow subscribers to be notified when new content is published to your blog or even your microsite. Prospects are often more likely to subscribe to an RSS feed than fill out a form because the feed enables them to determine the value of continued engagement without giving away a lot of personal information.

Beyond feeds, there are a number of alternatives for content distribution. Search out industry informational Web sites and online magazines that your prospects frequent. Learn the editorial policies of these sites, and become familiar with the type of content they publish. Publishing sites are always looking for additional content. You'll find your articles published with increasing frequency when you submit content focused on issues that matter to readers.

Association e-newsletters are also a vehicle for content distribution. Learn which newsletters your prospects subscribe to, and sign up to get copies. Note the kinds of articles these newsletters publish, and submit content you've developed that matches in tone and style. Make sure to include a short biography at the end with a link to related information or a microsite that features similar information. Don't use a link that dumps people on your corporate Web site's homepage.

Research agencies often allow companies to submit expertise commentary related to their findings and include it at the ends of

their reports. Likewise, industry experts are now publishing e-books addressing specific topics that compile articles written by a number of authors. In fact, your company could be the catalyst. Choose a topic, and invite a selection of industry experts to submit articles for inclusion in an e-book. Select included experts for their audience reach, and invite them to promote their inclusion in the e-book to their followers in addition to your own distribution efforts. Joint distribution can be a great way to discover new audiences that you haven't reached previously.

Syndication can be adapted a bit at a time and prove to be a great extender for the reach of your natural-nurturing programs. The additional opt-ins you generate help to source new business and prove you're in synch with what your market values.

FREQUENCY, REACH, AND SHIFT

Natural nurturing uses a variety of media channels to share your marketing story. This approach enables you to tell the story a piece at a time with different emphases depending on your audience. The same piece of content can be modified to appeal to the diverse needs of prospects across different segments and buying stages. Increase your attraction value and draw your prospects further into your story with content that is focused on helping them and is interrelated. The higher your attraction value, the more prospects will come to you seeking expertise, putting you in position to connect the dots for them.

When you create story content for a nurturing track, evaluate each piece by asking yourself and your team if you're just creating another touch point or if you're adding a layer of context to the story you're already telling. A layer builds on the story you're already sharing. A touch point may be on the same topic but may not have a natural tie-in with the rest of the story.

Creating a serial "cliffhanger" effect is one way to raise attraction value, provided that you've created material that is interesting, relevant, and valuable to your prospects. Unveil a useful story that keeps your content interesting. Once people know the value of the story, they'll engage with you more often because they're actively interested

in learning from you. Your ability to shift their perceptions will grow along with your attraction value.

It's helpful for marketers to remember that prospects are people, not just buyers. With natural nurturing, you don't necessarily need to know the actual identities of your prospects. What you really want is to interest people in your story, your company, and ultimately, your product offerings. Start thinking in terms of attraction value as opposed to simply capturing contact information—you'll find your prospects proactively identifying themselves to you earlier in their buying process.

Here's an example of why natural nurturing is important. Joe Blow may not fit any of the parameters of your target markets, but his respected colleague, Sam Smith, is being nurtured by one of your campaigns. Sam's response is okay, but he's done nothing to indicate a shift in urgency that might signal that he's ready for a sales conversation. That remains true until Joe becomes a trigger when he sees a blog post that references a piece of your story and forwards it to Sam as something he might find useful. You see, Joe knows that Sam is looking to solve a problem your story addresses, so he tries to help him out.

As you continue to monitor Sam's activity via your marketing automation system, you notice that he's now spending more of his attention on your story. Sam proactively visits your Web site to learn more and downloads some of the story pieces he's missed during previous nurturing contacts when he chose not to respond.

HUBSPOT ATTRACTS CUSTOMERS AT UNPRECEDENTED RATES: A CASE STUDY

Consider the story of HubSpot. While I was writing this book, I began to notice that HubSpot was showing up everywhere. I started following Mike Volpe, its vice president of marketing, on Twitter. I attended a couple of Webinars HubSpot sponsored because the topics and speakers were valuable and relevant to me. HubSpot began sending me e-mail communications with useful articles. As I began to trust that the content provided valuable information, I subscribed

to the HubSpot blog's RSS feed. Then I sent Mike a direct tweet and asked him if we could talk. He graciously agreed.

During our conversation, I found pretty much what I'd expected. Mike gave me real-world proof that contagious content approaches deliver significant results to marketing, sales, and the bottom line. Here's proof that natural nurturing works:

- In the last 12 months, HubSpot has grown from 150 to over 1,000 customers.
- Web-site traffic has multiplied by five times in one year.
- Over 80 percent of HubSpot's sales reps are above quota every month. In fact, for each of the three months prior to our conversation, the average sales rep on the team achieved 120 percent of quota.
- HubSpot sales reps do zero cold calling. They're kept busy making follow-up calls in response to qualified inquiries that progress quickly to deals.

So how does Mike cause this outcome? He uses multiple delivery channels to distribute content in a variety of formats. His company has a regular video TV show, hosts Webinars, and has created interactive widgets such as Website Grader, Twitter Grader, and Press Release Grader, that have been used by hundreds of thousands of people to source valuable information. Mike also spends a tremendous amount of time keeping abreast of industry developments and the concerns of prospective customers by monitoring and participating in social media communities such as Twitter and LinkedIn.

Figure 8.3 showcases just a little of HubSpot's natural-nurturing efforts. All of them reference some of the others, making it possible to connect with HubSpot across a number of Web properties. The amount of success HubSpot has achieved is beyond impressive. Who wouldn't love to have their sales reps monopolized with incoming inquiries every single day. Mike has helped HubSpot to achieve this kind of attraction naturally. And he's focused much of his efforts on generating the word of mouth that produces referrals and recommendations, expanding his company's reach and credibility.



Figure 8.3 HubSpot natural nurturing.

Influencers and recommenders are a critical component of a natural-nurturing philosophy. It’s crucial to include them in your eMarketing strategies. After all, peer recommendations and referrals are more influential than most other methods of awareness creation precisely because they’re given by people who are respected within their professional communities.

EFFECTIVE NURTURING EXECUTION

Most companies sell more than one product or solution, each designed individually or as a solution to answer specific customer needs. You’ll need more than one nurturing track—one for each of your target markets and the personas within them. The stories you’re sharing for each track all need to work together to strengthen your company’s overall expertise story as it relates to the problem-to-solution scenarios you address.

Your prospects likely will overlap in the places they frequent online. Make sure that your stories overlap and build on each other. Complementary stories will increase the cumulative results of your natural nurturing.

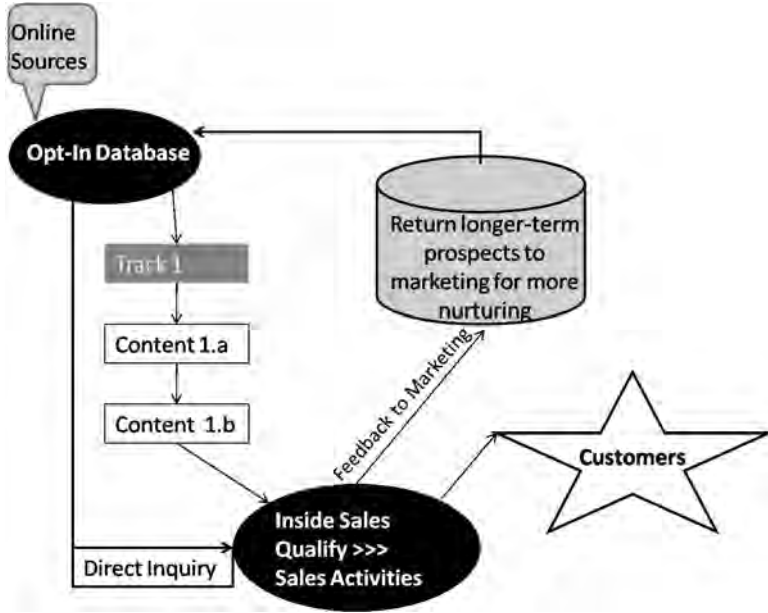


Figure 8.4 Natural nurturing framework.

Begin by mapping together your nurturing track for one persona and target market. Figure 8.4 is an example of an integrated natural nurturing framework. In this example, you have online sources of content that attract prospects, feeding them into your opt-in database at the top of the diagram. You’ve constructed one nurturing track based on a problem-to-solution scenario for a target segment and persona. As you commence sending your nurturing communications, attracting prospects to interact with your content, your marketing automation system will score their activities accordingly.

Once a prospect has reached the appropriate level, inside sales follows up with a personal call to learn their qualification level. If the prospect is sales-ready, she is transitioned to a sales rep. If she’s not ready, she remains in the nurturing track. As you add nurturing tracks, your inside sales rep can subtly probe to learn whether the prospect’s interests are being met or would be better served by moving her to another track.

With an eMarketing strategy, every nurturing communication is planned as an extension of the story you’re sharing in relation to a

problem-to-solution scenario. Each content resource builds on the last piece and increases the value provided to your prospects. As their engagement with your company grows, interactions will increase. Marketing automation is the system that pulls all your known prospect activity together to give you higher visibility into their virtual behavior. The system provides real-time feedback about the response level of your target segment, enabling you to adjust and tune your content for higher relevance with each step. Marketers are able to respond to prospects in near real time using digital dialogues to encourage exchanges that provide rewards for prospects—and for your company. You have increased capabilities to gather more intelligence to help you know precisely when prospects are ready for sales activities.

Because marketing has taken charge of propelling prospects farther through their buying process, salespeople are selling to more qualified buyers. This means shorter time to revenue and optimized results from your sales force.

REMEMBER YOUR EXISTING CUSTOMERS

While most nurturing programs are focused on attracting new business, creating nurturing tracks for customers is an important inclusion in your marketing mix for retention and creating up-sell or cross-sell opportunities. Some prospect content may be valuable to existing customers, but it's wise to create content specifically for them. And once you've developed personalized customer tracks, every new customer can be assigned to the one that is right for him. Continuing to build engagement beyond the sale ensures that your customers develop higher satisfaction and loyalty rates.

Once your customers are using your products, determine which triggering events can enable you to extend the value you're providing to them. Using the same technique of personas plus problem-to-solution scenarios, develop content to nurture them toward buying more to gain increasing business value. When you're considered a trusted advisor, it's important to continue offering expertise and education for the next issues they'll face as their situations evolve. It's likely that the elimination of one problem introduces new opportunities customers are now prepared to embrace.

The first year with a customer is important for retention quality and assurance of the continued use of your products because the customer gets the outcomes he needs. Implementation is only the first step. Many companies use only the features of a solution that are required to solve their initial problem. Create a content storyline that helps them to take advantage of every beneficial outcome your products make possible. When your company continues to contribute education and expertise your customers value, they'll have no need to turn to another vendor when new issues surface.