

REPORT

Top Content Channels

By Aaron Hoos

Aaron Hoos 
BUSINESS WRITER & STRATEGIST



REPORT: Top Content Channels

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Introduction

I'm frequently asked by clients where they should concentrate their efforts while marketing their business. They know that the right content in the right channels can make a significant and positive impact on their business but there are so many choices!

Of course, every business is different but here are a few that I recommend frequently (in no particular order):

- Blogs
- Articles
- Twitter
- Press Releases
- Reports

I've found that a significant effort in each of these options can help to grow a business with better search engine optimization, better positioning, more traffic, and higher sales.

In this report, I'll briefly touch on each of these content channels and how to use them in your business.



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Content Channel #1: Blogs

I think there is no better value for your business than to have a blog that you post on regularly. A blog provides you with a direct voice to your consumers that seems more intimate than an article while also offering a way for them to communicate with you (through comments) around the stories you tell. Furthermore, a blog is like a laboratory where you can share your thoughts and develop ideas, even if they are not fully thought-through.

Here's how to grow your business with a blog:

- Make sure you have a branded blog (a blog with a .wordpress or .blogspot in the domain name is okay but not as good as one that is entirely yours).
- Try to post three times a week minimum.
- Keep posts between 250 and 1000 words, but an average of 400 to 500 is good to aim for.
- Develop a list of topics you want to write about so that you are never at a loss for what to say.
- Identify 3 keywords that are important to your business and make sure they are in nearly every blog.
- Don't be afraid to let your personality shine through. People visit blogs to read blogs with the full understanding that they are one person's take on a situation.
- Each week or month, stockpile a handful of blogs in your "drafts" folder that you can publish at a moment's notice if you find that you do not have time that day.
- Avoid overtly selling in your blogs but a self-promotional link or advertisement in the footer of your post is appropriate.



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Content Channel #2: Articles

Even though there are millions and millions of articles out there right now, there is still space for you. Articles continue to be a powerhouse traffic-driver for many businesses. You can use articles to position yourself as a leading thinker in your industry. That will drive highly qualified traffic to your site.

Here's how to grow your business with articles:

- Create a publishing calendar so that you have enough articles to publish 1 a week for 6 months to a year. If you can hire someone to write your articles, you may want to consider doing more (say, 1 a day). However, most people don't have time to write 1 article a day without the help of a professional. (You've got other things to think about!)
- Aim to keep your articles between 450 and 600 words. Some articles are suitable to use words like "I" and "me" but many articles are best when they use a more neutral voice. This helps them to appear more credible. Save the "I" and "me" voice for your blog.
- If possible, prewrite and stockpile as many articles as you can so that you have some on hand for when you're too busy. (This is frequently a marketing channel that is neglected when things get busy).
- Look around for highly trusted sites to publish your work on. Consider who the target audience is first, but don't forget to take PageRank into consideration.
- Write content that is highly valuable to readers. One easy way to think of topics is to consider a question your audience has. Make that question your title and then respond to the question in the body of the article.
- Use the resource box to promote yourself.



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Content Channel #3: Twitter

Twitter really burst into the mainstream in 2009. Soon, business was being conducted in tweets of 140 characters or less. Twitter will continue its strong position in the market in the near future but now that the "honeymoon" period is over, users are forced to make sure that are doing the right things to be effective.

Here's how to grow your business with Twitter:

- Remember that Twitter is a social network. People don't want to be sold. They want to build relationships with others. Leave your hardselling techniques for your website and instead focus on sharing yourself with your followers.
- Twitter is a microblog so if you're not sure what to write, just think of it as a blog... only smaller. It's okay to talk about what you're doing or where you're going or a movie you just saw. Contemporary business does not separate business life and personal life but finds a balance between the two.
- Use a URL shortener like bit.ly to compress long domain names into manageable ones.
- You can keep your social engagement manageable by engaging with a small handful of people on a regular basis and with your broader network slightly less.
- Although most tweets should be written in the "here and now", there is room for some pre-written tweets which can be scheduled to post later at HootSuite.
- While you shouldn't sell on Twitter, you should make sure that your bio points people in the right direction so that when they are ready to buy from you, they can find you easily.



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Content Channel #4: Press Releases

Press releases continue to be a solid producer of results and, thanks to the way the web has changed how we do business, press releases are now a channel that can be accessed by the media (just like they've always been) but also by consumers. Press releases provide a way to get into Google News rapidly and get relevant backlinks.

Here's how to grow your business with press releases:

- Make sure that whatever you are writing about is newsworthy. Too many businesses write about non-newsworthy content and try to pass it off as a press release.
- Keep your press release to 400 – 600 words. Much longer than that and people simply won't read it.
- Make sure you have some contact information inside your press release.
- A press release should be written from the point of view of a journalist (so you should refer to your business in the third person). However, be sure to include quotes in your press release and those can be in first person and are ideal to promote yourself.
- Don't be afraid to spend money on distribution. Businesses frequently hire me to write press releases but then release them through a free service which is often less credible and very limited. [PRWeb](#) is the best service with paid distribution services between \$80 and \$360.
- Typical newscycles are a month or less. So consider publishing a press release each month about your subject.



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Content Channel #5: Whitepapers and reports

Reports or whitepapers are highly credible positioning documents that businesses can use to demonstrate thought-leadership on a subject. While some reports may not generate huge amounts of traffic or be solely responsible for a sale, they play a key role in driving more traffic and more sales by compelling people with their credibility. A business that wants to rapidly achieve the status of an authority on a topic should produce reports or whitepapers.

Here's how to grow your business with whitepapers or reports:

- Create a publishing calendar and plan to produce at least one report every quarter or, better yet, one report every two weeks.
- Aim to publish reports that are at least 3 pages (not including a cover). However, reports of 5-20 pages are better. Reports of a hundred pages or more are not unheard of but will need to be extremely valuable for customers to read them. (After about 40 pages, you may want to consider breaking it up into 2 or 3 reports).
- Reports need to strike the balance between being thought-leadership pieces and being relevant for consumers. It's okay to produce a report that anticipates trends a hundred years from now... as long as your business is also producing reports that address immediate needs.
- Good report topics should combine high quality information with high value applicability so that readers can apply what they've learned.
- While not always necessary, reports may be considered more authoritative if they have links and footnotes.



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Content Strategy

You've read about five top content channels here but it's important to note that publishing content in these channels doesn't happen in a vacuum. Your Twitter tweets will drive people to your website. Your press releases will do the same. Once they are on your site, what will your audience do? If you're not sure, that's what content strategy solves. Perhaps they will read your blog to connect with you one-on-one then download your whitepaper and finally call you to do business with them. But that's just one content strategy example. There are many to choose from.

Want to learn more about content strategy? [Visit my site to learn more about content strategy and the opportunity it provides your business.](#)



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About Aaron Hoos

Aaron Hoos is a business writer and strategist. He accelerates small business performance with content and content strategy. Aaron holds an MBA in Strategic Management and is the creator of the Business Diamond Framework(TM).

AaronHoos.com

aaron@aaronhoos.com

1.866.946.2679

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