

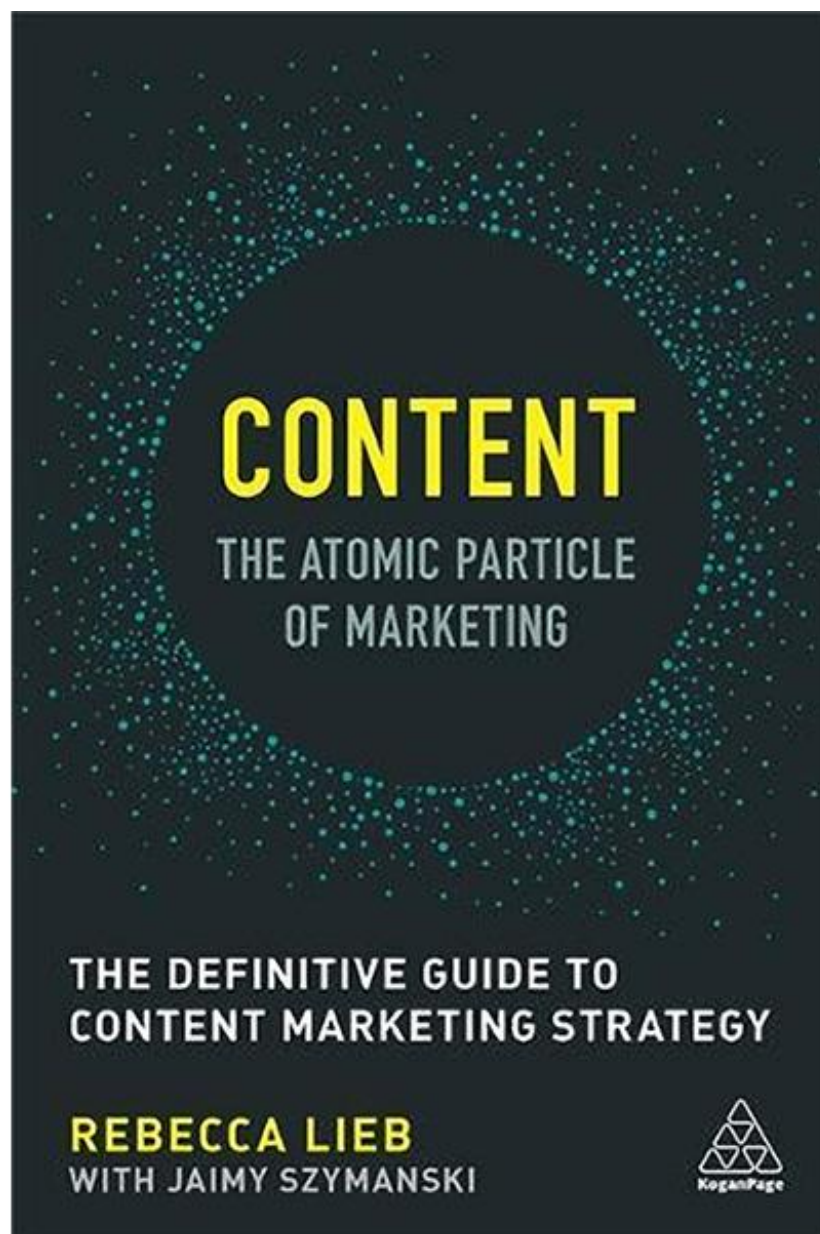
First Devise A Content Strategy, Then Do Content Marketing

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NativeINSIDER

Commentary

by Tobi Elkin , Staff Writer [@tobielkin](https://twitter.com/tobielkin), June 14, 2017



In order to have successful content marketing, you need a content strategy. By extension, in order to implement native advertising or branded content, you still need a content strategy as a foundation, plain and simple.

That's the basic premise of a new book, "Content – The Atomic Particle of Marketing," written by the consultant and analyst Rebecca Lieb. She argues that content is the most critical component of any marketing campaign, bringing value not only to companies' owned media channels, but to all its other marketing efforts including social media and offline channels.

Lieb shared more insights with *Native Insider*.

Native Insider: What is content marketing by your definition, and why is content the “atomic particle” of marketing?

Rebecca Lieb: Content marketing is a term that refers to the creation and sharing of content for marketing purposes. In digital channels, it refers to content that resides on properties the brand or marketer owns -- e.g., a Web site -- or largely controls from a content perspective: social media channels, syndication.

Content marketing differs from advertising in that, unlike advertising, a media buy is never part of the equation.

Content marketing involves a pull strategy vs. a push strategy which is interruptive.

Content marketing is meant to attract consumers; it's informative and educational, funny and entertaining. It leads [consumers] to a desired action.

In its purest form, it's owned media, the stuff you control as a brand: a company Web site, newsletter, email, and social media presence because you control the content on your Facebook page. Facebook is actually converged media: paid, owned, and earned.

I say content is the atomic particle of all marketing because you can't have marketing without content. You can't have social media without content! Even in paid media, ad creative is just another fancy word for content.

NI: What is native advertising?

RL: Native advertising is a form of converged media that combines paid and owned media into a form of commercial messaging that's fully integrated into, and often unique to, a specific delivery platform.

Native advertising is a form of converged media: owned plus paid. Native isn't necessarily only in-feed advertising. Native is also emerging from publishers' brand studios in which you commission a real publisher to create content on your behalf.

NI: You discuss “customer-centric” content in the book. What do you mean by that?

RL: I mean don't talk about yourself, focus on the other person. Content marketing is much more about letting the audience opt into the content. It's more polite.

NI: You say there are different types of content. What are they?

RL: There are three broad buckets of content:entertaining, educational, and utility content.

Entertaining content is something like viral video which people access because it's fun and entertaining, and shareable.

Educational content is used by marketers to help consumers and business decision-makers make the best decisions.

And utility content is primarily mobile in nature and helps solve problems. This type of content could be a tool or an app.

NI: Before brands can even implement native advertising, you assert that they need to devise a content strategy. So what are brands doing wrong with respect to content marketing?

RL: Doing content marketing without having a content strategy. They don't have it tied to specific business goals. It needs to be measured, optimized, and structures need to be developed to produce it in a balanced way. Upwards of 75% of brands don't yet have documented content strategies.

NI: What are brands doing right?

RL: They're documenting their strategy and figuring out how to measure performance. I'm excited that the brands that are mature enough about content, measure it beyond a lift in sales. Unilever, working with Percolate, documented that it saved \$1 billion in a year when it became more strategic about content.

NI: What kind of tools for measuring content marketing effectiveness are available?

RL: There are dashboards—some 250 tools to measure content performance have this in common.

You can measure a lot of stuff, but the question is, are you measuring what's relevant? Too many tools only measure the volume of traffic and likes. These are vanity metrics.

You can measure traffic and brand consideration, of course, but also whether you're getting more leads, shortening sales cycles, increasing your share of thought leadership vis-à-vis competitors, and more. Increasingly, there are ways to measure the online/offline resonance as well.

NI: Where is the budget coming from for content marketing initiatives?

RL: It's hard to correlate content marketing budgets. Most marketers don't have a content marketing department and there's no specific budget. The budget is attributable to social media and communications, so it's coming from corporate communications divisions. A lot of

the content for content marketing initiatives is recycled and repurposed from social media, paid ads, newsletters, blog posts, etc.

NI: The bottom line: What's overlooked by marketers?

RL: Not having a content strategy, and then they get bogged down in tactics and scare themselves silly. Marketers say they want more content. But what do you really need? They need to be able to measure content performance better, find audiences wherever they are, and be able to target them.

Lieb's book is available now on the Amazon Kindle and in paperback June 28.