

**Powerful Content Resources:**  
*A Short E-book Full of Links and  
Information About the Digital  
Media Content Business*

by Todd Tibbetts of Aquent

compliments of

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This resource guide is intended to accompany the March 27, 2008, American Marketing Association webcast “Make Your Content a Powerful Asset in 10 Steps,” presented by Aquent’s [Todd Tibbetts](#). This collection of tips and best practices will help you make your content a powerful asset for your organization. The resources, links, and recommendations in this document will be helpful to creative and technical professionals who work with digital media content assets such as text, videos, illustrations, photos, and sound.

Content development is an essential component of your brand execution. Managing multiple content streams can be a challenge, and Aquent can help. Aquent is the only global staffing firm dedicated to helping companies increase their marketing capacity by providing the right marketing and creative professionals, quickly. We can send you the contract marketers, writers, and content developers you need to execute all your marketing projects.

We look forward to providing information about the latest marketing trends and helping your organization improve its capacity to execute marketing projects. For more information about us, please visit [aquent.com](http://aquent.com) or call **877 227 8368** to be connected with your nearest Aquent office.

**A Q U E N T**

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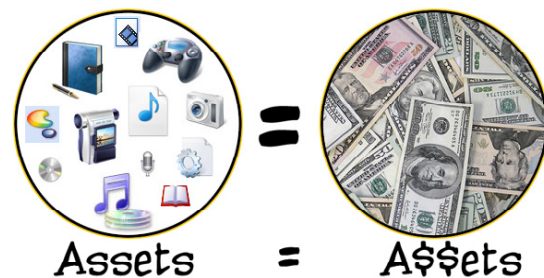
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## Introduction

I often work with clients who are overwhelmed by their content, information, and digital assets. For many individuals and companies, content is a messy thing, a liability, and a cost center. It takes focus and effort to turn the content from a liability into an asset, but the path is straightforward and the goal is very achievable. Your organization will benefit internally and externally, creating a smoother-running operation on the inside and promoting your message to the outside world. You may even create additional revenue streams once you wrangle all those assets.

This is continuous publishing in a global digital media environment. Control your content before someone else does. Today much of your content is digital. And it has escaped your grasp. Below I'll describe your 10 to-do items. You'll get control of your content and you'll grow to understand the power and value that content will bring you.

At no time in history have humans ever created this much data, information, and content. Entire industries have developed to address economic, legal, creative, and technical challenges. If you are a manager, marketer, designer, or technician, your continued self-education is imperative to your success in the new global digital media landscape. This e-book is a launchpad for your self-directed educational exploration. Forward!



## Step 1: Discover What You Have Now

Identify your existing content. What do you have? What format is it in? Perform a [content inventory](#) or [content audit](#). Create a content matrix, which is essentially a spreadsheet of all your media pieces and their attributes. See **Appendix A** for a template to create your own content matrix.

Some common styles of content are entertainment, marketing, medical, technical, and user generated. What type do you have? Your content is probably a mix. Don't assume that you don't have any technical content, because most people and organizations do. Specific content such as maps, street addresses, and driving directions are technical in the respect that they must be exact. Understand your mix.

Why bother digging through everything that you own? The term [content migration](#) refers to the process of taking the old content and moving it to a new environment or system. Once you know what you have, it will be easier to move it to a new location. Your media assets also become more valuable once you know what exists.

You will need to develop a [content plan](#) to get your project off on the right foot. See **Appendix A** for an outline you can use to create your plan.

## Step 2: Develop Your Core

Create the essential main ingredients of your content. This is often called [single source](#) where a team develops base content that is used in multiple locations or formats. Crystallize your message into the essential ingredients. Focus on removing rather than adding. Pare it down to the bare minimum.

A common way to start this process is by developing a [mission or vision statement](#). Forcing yourself to describe your overall purpose or goals can be a challenge, but once this core idea is generated, the rest of the content can flow from it.

As you and your team begin to develop content, you'll want to establish a workflow. An entire [workflow industry](#) exists and has standards, processes, and practices that allow organizations to work well together. But for the purpose of content production, it is only necessary to establish who needs to create or review the content ... and when. Who will be the final set of eyes to review the content? Who will you pass your work to when you are done? Who hands you their work? Establish flow!

## Step 3: Prepare for Community Involvement

Your content will be captured, quoted, and manipulated. Content gets loose. Plan for it. Make your [community plan](#). Much like a business plan, it outlines your philosophy, approach, and rules for your audience/social network. This is user-centered content creation: Know your audience. Give them a voice. Give them tools like [widgets](#) or online forums.

The Internet is people! Although the Internet is reliant on technology and design, it essentially exists because it is a communication medium that allows humans to interact. This is the most powerful aspect of the web. Use this power or it will use you. The [network effect](#) states that the overall value of the web increases as more users join. Encourage community growth.

User-centered content creation is all about creating the right content for your particular audience. Know your audience and you'll be better able to create the right content for them. Develop [personas](#) to help you identify who is in your community.

Try to create **trusted content**, content that will have perceived value as being authoritative. In a world where [user-generated content](#) is prevalent, everyone has a voice, including disgruntled employees. Make sure that you establish yourself as a trusted source for content of a predictable quality.

[Social Media Optimization](#)—"The Merging of Traditional Media, Search Engine Marketing, and Social Marketing" blog

[Mashable](#)—a social networking news blog

***The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier***

by [Howard Rheingold](#)

"Written by the man known as the First Citizen of the Internet, this book covers Rheingold's experiences with virtual communities. It starts off with his home community, The Well, out of Sausalito, California, and makes its way through MUDs and beyond. No one understands the compelling strength of online community like Rheingold."

**Church of the Customer**—"Ben McConnell and Jackie Huba are writers, speakers, and consultants. Both live and work in Austin, Texas. Since 2001, Ben and Jackie have been researching the effects of word of mouth on customer loyalty. They call their work 'the word of mouth gospel.'"

***Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing Without Organizations***

by [Clay Shirky](#)

A book about what happens when people are given the tools to do things together, without needing traditional organizational structures.

***Permission Marketing: Turning Strangers Into Friends and Friends Into Customers***

by [Seth Godin](#)

Seth Godin, one of the world's foremost online promoters, offers his best advice for advertising. Godin argues that businesses can no longer rely solely on traditional forms of "interruption advertising" in magazines, mailings, or radio and television commercials. He writes that today's consumers are bombarded by marketing messages almost everywhere they go. If you want to grab someone's attention, you first need to get his or her permission with some kind of bait—a free sample, a big discount, a contest, an 800 number, or even just an opinion survey.

**Smart Mobs**—A book and blog by Howard Rheingold. Understand the next social revolution—mobile communication, pervasive computing, wireless networks, and collective action.

## Step 4: Architect Your Content

Use information architecture theories and approaches. Put your content into categories that make sense. This is often called bucketing. Try doing a [card sort](#). Your community may begin to add categories and tags to your content if you let them. This "[folksonomy](#)" approach can be powerful.

Many modern taxonomists are suggesting that we are seeing the [demise of folders](#) and the [death of buckets](#). In other words, if all content can be tagged with keywords, then why bother sticking them in any particular folder? How often have we all tried to file a document in a particular folder only to realize that it could actually be at home in multiple folders? With tagging, we don't have to worry about this—just tag a document with a variety of keywords and you'll be able to find it again one day.

Remember that SEO (search engine optimization) and SEM (search engine marketing) are essentially all about content. Sculpt and organize your content according to modern [SEO theory](#).

The guru of user interfaces, the king of usability, [Dr. Jakob Nielsen](#) preaches the gospel of usable information technology. (<http://www.useit.com/alertbox/content-strategy.html>)

[Edward Tufte](#) has written seven books, including *Visual Explanations*, *Envisioning Information*, *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information*, and *Data Analysis for Politics and Policy*. He writes, designs, and self-publishes his books on analytical design, which have received more than 40 awards for content and design. He is a professor emeritus at Yale University, where he taught courses in statistical evidence, information design, and interface design. His current work includes landscape sculpture, printmaking, video, and a new book.

[Six Pixels of Separation](#)—"When Google wanted to explain online marketing to the top retailers in the United States (including Wal-Mart, Costco, Sears, and Sephora), they brought Mitch Joel to the Googleplex in Mountain View, California. *Marketing Magazine* dubbed him the 'Rock Star of Digital Marketing,' and in 2006 he was named one of the most influential authorities on blog marketing in the world."

### ***Everything Is Miscellaneous***

by [David Weinberger](#)

"How we're pulling ourselves together now that we've blown ourselves to bits." Also see Weinberger's [Google talks video](#).

### ***Don't Make Me Think: A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability***

by Steve Krug

## **Step 5: Create Your Multidestinational Plan**

We are in a [cross-platform](#) world. Your content will live on more than the three screens (TV, computer, mobile). Create a delivery method attribute matrix to predict where your content is most likely to land and what facets it will have.

Remember that we are in the age of the globalization of content. Understand translation, localization, and [multilingual communications](#). Integrating your content development with almost-simultaneous translation and localization will improve quality and time to market and will reduce costs.

[Digital Content Producer](#) is a website devoted to "film and video production in a multiplatform world."

[Beet.tv](#)—"The root to the media revolution" contains interviews, stories, and event coverage—all in video.

***Lots of Little Screens: TV Is Changing Shape***

By Denise Caruso for *The New York Times*

"Inexpensive broadband access has done far more for online video than enable the success of services like YouTube and iTunes. By unchaining video watchers from their TV sets, it has opened the floodgates to a generation of TV producers for whom the Internet is their native medium."

***Digital Media: Transformations in Human Communication***

by [Lee Humphreys](#) (Editor), [Paul Messaris](#) (Editor)

"In this must-have new anthology, top media scholars explore the leading edge of digital media studies to provide a broad, authoritative survey of the study of the field and a compelling preview of future developments. This book is divided into five key areas—video games, digital images, the electronic word, computers and music, and new digital media—and offers an invaluable guide for students and scholars alike."

***Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide***

by [Henry Jenkins](#)

"Henry Jenkins, founder and director of MIT's comparative media studies program, debunks outdated ideas of the digital revolution in this remarkable book, proving that new media will not simply replace old media, but rather will learn to interact with it in a complex relationship he calls 'convergence culture.' The book's goal is to explain how convergence is currently impacting the relationship among media audiences, producers, and content, a far from easy undertaking."

**Step 6: Acquire or Build Your Tools**

Content management tools will most likely be needed. Make your [build vs. buy decision](#). The independent [CMS Matrix](#) site is provided as a community service to everyone interested in looking for a means to manage website content. Users can discuss, rate, and compare the various systems available on the market today.

"When all you have is a hammer, then every problem starts looking like a nail." Artists should experiment with new mediums. Musicians should try other instruments, and knowledge workers should broaden their tool sets and approaches.

[Pro Blogger](#)—"A blog that helps bloggers to add income streams to their blogs."

[The Bloggers Guide to Search Engine Marketing](#)

[Tips for New Bloggers](#)



## Step 7: Design Your Content

[Separate your content](#) from the way it is presented. Determine the base elements of your visual brand and stick to 'em. Also begin to understand if your content is static (images, text) or if it is time-based (sound, animation, videos). Prepare to have your content look slightly different on different screens. Embrace the difference.

"[Boxes and Arrows](#) is devoted to the practice, innovation, and discussion of design, including graphic design, interaction design, information architecture, and the design of business. Since 2001, it's been a peer-written journal promoting contributors who want to provoke thinking, push limits, and teach a few things along the way."

"[Digital Web Magazine](#) is an online magazine intended for professional web designers, web developers and information architects."

[Adaptive Path](#) is a leading user-experience research, development, and training firm located in San Francisco.

## Step 8: Document It

For internal use and the retention of institutional knowledge, please document your content adventures. Develop [style guides](#) and [knowledge management practices](#) to ensure that knowledge transfers to others on your team or others who may follow in the future.

***Information Development: Managing Your Documentation Projects, Portfolio, and People***

by JoAnn T. Hackos

***Web Style Guide: Basic Design Principles for Creating Websites***

by Patrick J. Lynch and Sarah Horton

***Knowledge Management***

by Carl Frappaolo

## Step 9: Tell Your Story Continuously

Assign, hire, or rent full-time staff to constantly add new content. Generate [continuous content](#). Become [thought leaders](#). Real quality content wins. Don't fill a page with keywords and call it content. Humans and machines can tell what good content is, and they seek it out.

Content creation used to be a cottage industry, with writers working as freelancers and creating the work outside of the organization. Now full teams with a variety of skills are needed. Pull in experts for a short time only when you need them. Pay top dollar for subject matter expertise, but use early-career resources for the grunt work.

Your content will reflect your brand. There is the [Branded Content Marketing Association](#) to help you stay up-to-date. Also check out [Branded Entertainment online magazine](#) as they interview R/GA, the world's most award-winning interactive agency.

***The New Rules of Marketing and PR: How to Use News Releases, Blogs, Podcasting, Viral Marketing, and Online Media to Reach Buyers Directly***

by [David Meerman Scott](#)

"In *The New Rules of Marketing and PR*, I make it easy for you to learn online thought leadership and viral marketing strategies. These are the 'new rules' I've used to create marketing programs that have sold over a billion dollars of products and services." Also check out his great [e-books](#).

## Step 10: Track It

Define your [metrics for success](#) and document your benchmarks. Analyze your numbers. Watch them change. Modify your behavior based on results, not assumptions. There is no way to tell if you are successful when you haven't established what you are measuring.

[Web Analytics Demystified](#) has been called the most useful and most influential book on website measurement ever published. This is the perfect book for anyone new to the subject or anyone tasked with implementing web analytics in his or her organization.

***Madison & Vine: Why the Entertainment & Advertising Industries Must Converge to Survive***

by [Scott Donaton](#)

"From the sharp decline in CD sales to the fragmentation of network TV audiences, the business models of the entertainment and advertising industries are showing severe cracks. *Advertising Age* editor Scott Donaton—who coined the term Madison & Vine™—lays out a case for why these industries will need to converge to survive, overcoming hurdles and creating business models based on content-commerce partnerships. *Madison & Vine* reveals how new technology is disrupting traditional business models, giving the consumer more control over the product."

***Managing Enterprise Content: A Unified Content Strategy***

by Ann Rockley

## About Todd Tibbetts and Aquent

**Todd Tibbetts** has worked in the Internet industry since 1989 for such companies as LuxWorldwide.com, 3M, Free Range Media, and the Whole Earth Catalog. In 1994, he cofounded MountainZone.com and helped establish the business model and strategy that turned the company into a premier commerce, content, and community company with over 100 employees. Quokka Sports bought MountainZone four years later. Todd has produced multimedia websites for America Online, the NFL, Kodak, CBS TV, K2 Skis, Safeco Insurance, Westin Hotels, HP, and Microsoft. Since 2005 Todd has volunteered his time as president of the board of trustees at 911 Media Arts Center, a Seattle non-profit supporting artists and independent filmmakers working with digital tools. Read his blog at [toddtibbetts.com/blog](http://toddtibbetts.com/blog).

**Aquent Studios** is a division of **Aquent**, the only global staffing firm dedicated to helping companies increase their marketing capacity by providing the right marketing and creative professionals, quickly.

Aquent Studios provides project outsourcing for clients who want to contract out all or part of their creative services, marketing, or content development projects. The Aquent Studios team scopes the job, designs the solution, manages the work, and delivers according to client specifications. Work can be done on- or offsite, or even offshore, depending on your needs. In essence, clients enjoy the benefits of a design studio or an ad agency without the associated costs or long-term commitment.

A special thanks to the **American Marketing Association** for their ongoing partnership and support.

## Appendix A

### OUTLINE FOR A CONTENT PLAN

Use this outline to develop your plan prior to your content development efforts.

#### Step 1: Content Purpose

Explain why this content needs to be created.

- **Business objectives.** In this section, list the overall objectives that will be met by the creation of this content.
- **Strategies for achieving business objectives.** In this section, describe the strategies for achieving the objectives listed above.

#### Step 2: Content Audience

Describe whom this content is for and what they need to learn from the content. If there is more than one audience, describe the primary and secondary audiences.

- **Audience definition.** For each audience group, answer as many of the following questions as possible:
  - > What is the technical level of the audience?
  - > What is the professional background(s) of the audience?
  - > What are the prerequisites for being a member of the audience?
  - > What are the information needs of the audience (objectives)?
  - > Are there other demographic considerations about the audience?
  - > Has the client already defined audience “personas” (typical users who will be consuming this content)? If so, list them here.
  - > What type(s) of media is this audience most likely to use (print, Web-based article, CBT, etc.)?
  - > Are there any other considerations for the audience?
- **Learning objectives.** List the things that the audience (or customers) can’t do today that the creation of this content will enable them to do. Summarize how the content will be used. Provide a few scenarios that illustrate and clarify usage.

#### Step 3: Content Scope

Describe what will be produced, by detailing the content deliverables.

- What is within the scope of the content? List the things that are within the scope of the content.
- What is not within the scope of the content? List the things that are NOT within the scope of the content.
- **Content length.** Specify an approximate page count for each deliverable. If a deliverable will consist of multiple topics, specify an approximate number of topics.

- **Content outline.** Outline the content to be created. The outline should be as detailed as possible. Also, consider whether the outline included here will be updated throughout the duration of the project and, if so, whether to make the source of the outline dynamic or static.

#### Step 4: Content Process

Describe how you will create the content.

- **Content authoring and delivery.** This section should provide answers to the following questions:
  - > In what program will the content be authored? (For example, Word, FrameMaker, XMetaL, etc.)
  - > If artwork is required for this content, in what file format will the artwork be created and delivered?
  - > Will the content result in one or more deliverables? (For example, one printed user's guide; a file that will be printed as well as displayed online; a blended-learning deliverable (CBT and ILT); an SDK that will be part of a larger SDK; etc.)
  - > In what format will the content be delivered? (For example, as a Word document, XML files, a CHM file, CBT, ILT, blended, etc.) If there is more than one document type, specify the primary type from which the other types will be derived.
  - > How will files be shared among team members? For example, will we use a SharePoint site, extranet site, VSS or other database, FTP, ZIP files in e-mail, other?
  - > Are there any proprietary tools that we'll need to use for content authoring or delivery? If so, what are they and how will we get them?
- **Editorial style guides.** List the style guides that we will need to use while writing and editing the content.
- **Localization requirements.** Indicate whether this content will be localized. If localization is required, specify the languages into which the content will be localized and by what date(s). Include any other details related to the localization process.
- **Content reuse and sustainability.** Indicate whether this content will be used one time only or if it will be updated and reused in the months and years to come. If this content will be reused after it is created, describe the ways in which it will be reused.
- **Task breakdown by role.** In this section, list the roles of each person involved in the project and the tasks performed within each role.

#### Step 5: Content Schedule

Specify when you will produce this content. Include specific dates and a tentative schedule. Also, consider whether the schedule included here will be updated throughout the duration of the project and, if so, whether to make the source of the schedule dynamic or static.

### Step 6: Client Sign-off

A content plan is created to ensure that the project starts off on the right foot. You will refer to this plan throughout the duration of the project to make sure you're staying on track. This plan can also be an agreement between clients and vendors. Create a signing page to indicate that all parties agree with the content plan.

### Content Matrix Template

ASSET TAG	TITLE	ALT TITLE	TYPE	LENGTH	AUTHOR	OWNER	LOCATION	CREATED	TAGS
1001									
1002									
1003									
1004									
1005									
1006									
1007									
1008									
1009									

### Content Matrix Template Sample

ASSET TAG	TITLE	ALT TITLE	TYPE	LENGTH	AUTHOR	OWNER	LOCATION	CREATED	TAGS
1001	Moby Dick	The Whale	text	720pp	Herman Melville		//Peleg/ text	1851	pagan harpooneers, stricken sperm whale, ivory leg

Types can include images, logos, video (physical), video (digital), audio, painting (digital), painting (physical), animation, etc.

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