




STAPLES®

How to Use Content Marketing to Increase Your Sales

**YOUR CUSTOMERS ARE
BEING SOLD TO MORE
THAN EVER.**



**Every day, on average,
they view as many as 5,000
marketing messages and
receive 122 business emails.**

To be successful, you don't need better ideas or investors. You need to learn how to sell.

But how businesses sell is changing drastically thanks to the increasingly product-saturated internet landscape and social media.

Think about how you encounter products or services in your life:

You discover an artisanal candle company via an Instagram post. You find a chiropractor through a blog post he authored.

These are examples of pull marketing (often referred to as content marketing) and it — and its three tenets: storytelling, distribution and engagement — are the future of sales.

78% of CMOs think content is the future of marketing.

66% of marketers say it's superior to PR, direct mail and print advertising.

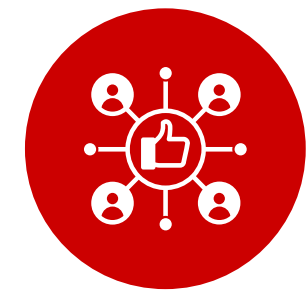
Content is **92%** more effective than traditional TV advertising at increasing awareness and 168% more powerful at driving purchase preference.

Pull marketing involves telling stories that “pull” customers into your world.

Good stories trigger emotions, causing our bodies to release oxytocin, also known as the “trust hormone.” Brands that effectively tell and share stories are more memorable (and trustworthy) to customers.

And only when potential customers remember your business — and trust it — will they make a purchase.

Such stories can be told through content that includes ...



Social Media Posts



Infographics



Podcasts



Videos



White papers



E-books



Events



SlideShares
(like this one)



Mailers/
Marketing Handouts

“Storytelling is knowing that everything you’re saying, from the first sentence to the last, is leading to a singular goal,” says Andrew Stanton, writer behind the three *Toy Story* movies and *WALL-E*, in his TED talk.

Telling a good story is a bit of an art — one you get better at with practice — but follow these seven tenets and you’ll be off to a strong start:

- 1** **Be clear.** Define who your audience is and what you want to share with them. Be specific. Keep it simple.
- 2** **Add perspective.** Tell the story from your or another person or character’s point of view. (But don’t make yourself or your business the hero of the story.)
- 3** **Be authentic.** Stay true to you and your business. Write or talk how you would in a conversation.
- 4** **Include emotion.** We connect with stories that care about something that we do. Where relevant include an emotional anecdote or fact.
- 5** **Solve a problem.** Frame a challenge for your audience and solve it.
- 6** **Be a journalist.** Think about what people want to know, and do your research.
- 7** **Think visually.** Photos and graphics not only catch the eye but they can bring a story to life. Include them wherever and whenever possible.

When it comes to stories, the “quality over quantity” adage holds true: One well-told story that adds value to your customers’ lives will have greater impact than five mediocre ones.

To get started, try one of these ideas for a compelling story related to your business:



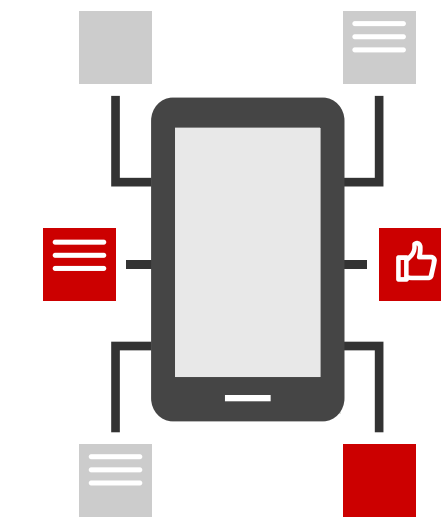
A short video detailing three fun and surprising things you can do with your product



An infographic that helps a customer make a decision about a product that you sell, for example, wine pairings for summer



A blog post that shares the story of one of your customers and how your product or service has impacted her life



A social media post that shares a personal insight related to your business, a book you recently read, for example

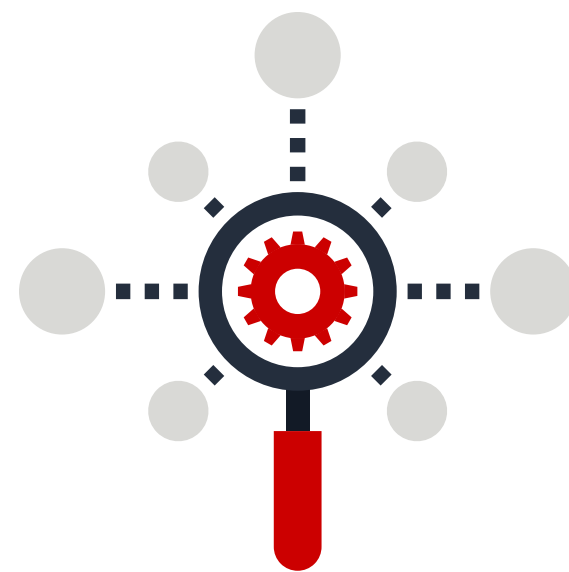
A person's hand, wearing a black watch, points towards a group of people in a meeting. The background is blurred, showing several people sitting and listening. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

However, a story is only effective if it reaches the right people.

You have to share it. Distribution is the way that we make that happen.

A successful distribution strategy delivers the content that you create to your target audience in a way that helps you build relationships with current and future customers.

You can't go wrong with these four tried-and-true distribution tactics:



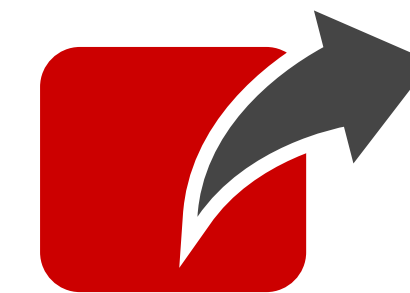
Optimize your content for SEO and publish it to your company's blog or website.



Meet your target audience where they are by sharing it on social media.



Include it in the next issue of your company's email newsletter.

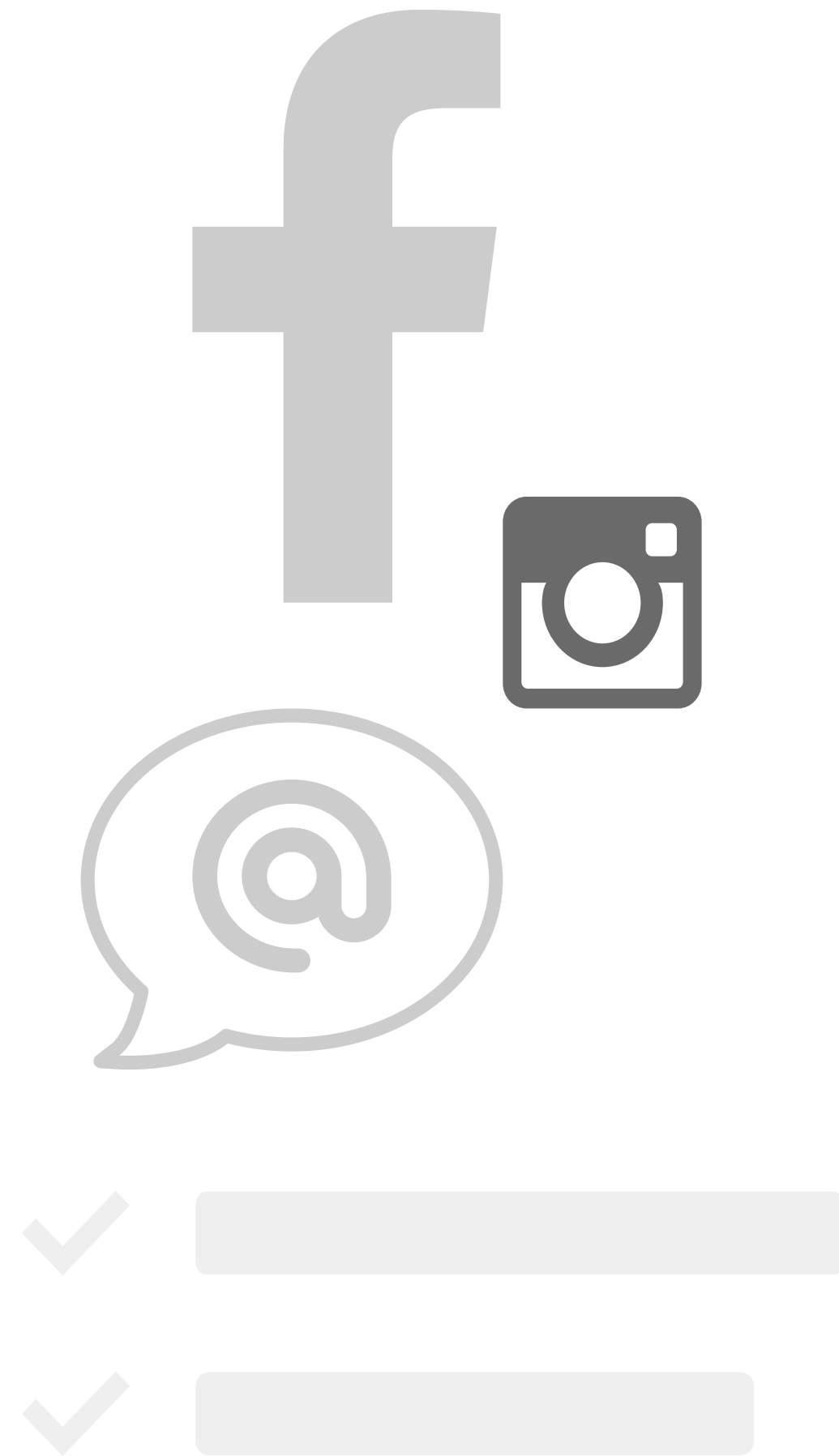


Ask complementary businesses to share it with their audience.

A woman with dark hair in a bun, wearing a bright yellow blazer over a white top and a long necklace, is smiling and handing a gift wrapped in brown paper with a yellow ribbon to a customer. The background is a blurred interior space with shelves holding various decorative items like plants and books.

Lastly, good stories start conversations with your customers. Conversations build relationships.

The more you engage in those conversations, the more your customers will get to know you and your business. People like to buy from people they know.



Such conversations can take many forms, such as a discussion thread on Facebook, comments on an Instagram post, email inquiries, surveys, communities and groups. The ways in which we communicate today are plentiful, and so are the ways in which you can engage with customers.

Remember to listen. If you fail to listen to customers, you risk losing their business, as they'll feel unheard and they can easily take their business to someone else who will listen.

In today's busy media and sales landscape, always remember that reaching customers on a deeper, more intrinsic level will lead to more sales in the long run.

Strong content that's smartly distributed and that generates meaningful conversation will lead to a stronger customer lifetime value than any 50 percent off sale ever could.



For more tips on how to master pull marketing, visit the [**Staples Small Business Hub**](#).

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SOURCES

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