

The Content Marketing Mission Statement

I cannot give you the formula for success,
but I can give you the formula for failure, which is:
Try to please everybody.

HERBERT B. SWOPE, AMERICAN JOURNALIST

In the dining room of our house, there is a mission statement on the wall. I refer to it often. So do my two boys, now ages 10 and 12.

The mission statement is our family purpose. It's what we strive to be today and into the future. I believe that mission statement has been crucial to our family's success and happiness.

Here is what it says.

THE PULIZZI MISSION

As Pulizzis, we hold true the following with ongoing purpose and action:

- We *thank God* every day for our blessings, even on days when we are challenged or face hardships.

- We *always share* what we have with others, and help out whenever we can to whoever is in need.
- We *praise each other*, as we are each blessed by God with unique talents.
- We *always finish* what we start, *always try* even though we may be afraid, and *always give* the activity of the moment our full attention.

Short Version:

- Thank God. Always Share. Say Nice Things. Give Our Best.
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To be honest, I initially thought this was just a nice idea and a motto for our family to live by. Now a dozen years in the making, our mission statement has played a critical role in our lives. Why? Because there is never any gray area for our family goals. When the kids have questions about what they should and shouldn't do, my wife and I refer to the mission statement. Now, after years of this, my kids refer to the mission statement themselves—sometimes reluctantly.

And the best part? When visitors come into our house, the mission statement is noticed right away and almost always commented upon. It's one of those little things that make a difference.

THE CONTENT MARKETING MISSION STATEMENT

A mission statement is a company's reason for existence. It's why the organization does what it does. For example, Southwest Airlines' mission statement has always been to democratize the travel experience. The mission statement for CVS is to be the easiest pharmacy retailer for customers to use. So, in simple terms, the mission statement must answer the question, "Why do we exist?"

In almost every one of my keynote presentations, I cover the content marketing mission statement. It's critical to set the tone for the idea of content marketing . . . or any marketing, for that matter. Marketing professionals from small and large businesses get so fixated on channels such as blogs, Facebook, or Pinterest that they really have no clue of the underlying reason why they should use that channel in the first place. So the *why* must come before the *what*. This seems obvious, but most marketers have no mission statement or core strategy behind the content they develop. Epic content marketing is impossible without a clear and formidable *why*.

Think of it this way: What if you were the leading trade magazine for your niche area? What if your goal was not to first sell products and services but to impact your readers with amazing information that changes their lives and careers?

WHY *INC.* SUCCEEDS

Inc. magazine (see Figure 13.1) has its mission statement in the first line of its About Us page.

Welcome to Inc.com, the place where entrepreneurs and business owners can find useful information, advice, insights, resources and inspiration for running and growing their businesses.



Source: Inc.com

Figure 13.1 What if we all started thinking about our websites like publishers do?

Let's dissect this a bit. *Inc.*'s mission statement includes:

- **The core audience target:** Entrepreneurs and business owners
- **What material will be delivered to the audience:** Useful information, advice, insights, resources, and inspiration
- **The outcome for the audience:** Growing their businesses

Inc.'s mission statement is incredibly simple and includes no words that can be misunderstood. Simplicity is key for how you will use your content marketing mission statement.

CONTENT MARKETING MISSION STATEMENTS IN ACTION

P&G (Procter & Gamble) has produced HomeMadeSimple.com for more than a decade now (see Figure 13.2). Millions of consumers have signed

P&G's HomeMadeSimple

HOME made simple. Fresh ideas to make your own

US English

Sign In Register Search for inspiration Search

Food + Recipe Organization Crafts Décor Holiday + Party Garden Cleaning Safe Home

Furniture Makeovers
Update 11 common home items with our simple makeover ideas.
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Home Made Simple TV Series
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SHOP NOW • P&G eStore

Source: HomeMadeSimple.com

Figure 13.2 HomeMadeSimple.com, one of P&G's many content marketing platforms.

up at Home Made Simple to receive regular updates and tips to help them be more efficient in the home.

This is the content marketing mission statement for HomeMade Simple.com:

Whether it's a delicious recipe, an inspiring décor idea or a refreshing approach to organizing, we strive to help you [a mom] create a home that's truly your own. Everything we do here is designed to empower and inspire you to make your home even better, and most importantly, a place you love to be.

Home Made Simple's mission includes:

- **The core audience target:** On-the-go moms (P&G doesn't explicitly say this on its site for obvious reasons, but this is its audience.)
- **What will be delivered to the audience:** Recipes, inspiring ideas, and new approaches to organization
- **The outcome for the audience:** Improvements to your home life

So, for P&G, if the story idea doesn't fit into these three tenets, it's a nonstarter.

Why is the content marketing mission statement so critical for businesses and their content? Your team needs to come up with great content ideas all the time—for the blog, for your Facebook page, for your newsletter. The way that you know whether or not story ideas are appropriate or not is to check each one against your content marketing mission statement.

If someone from P&G has a great idea targeted to dads and wants to put it on Home Made Simple, it won't get accepted; it's the wrong target audience. What if the story is about how to fix a tire? Nope, it doesn't fit with the promise of what you'll consistently deliver.

Here are other mission statements worth checking out:

- **American Express OPEN Forum.** "OPEN Forum is an online community to exchange insights, get advice from experts, and build connections to help you power your small business success."
- **Content Marketing Institute.** "Deliver real-world how-to advice about content marketing in all channels (online, print, and in-person) to help enterprise marketing professionals become less reliant on outside media channels."
- **Parametric Technology (PTC) Product Lifecycle blogs.** "Deliver non-product-specific, general interest news stories that relate, directly or indirectly, to the topic of product development and how it relates

to design engineers. The goal is for design engineers to think differently about innovation and product development.”

- **Kraft Foods.** “Create delicious meal solutions that inspire amazing food stories which spread to drive sales and create value for Kraft Foods.”
- **Williams-Sonoma.** “Be the leader in cooking and entertaining by delivering great products, world-class service and *engaging content*” (emphasis mine).

AUTHORITY TO PUBLISH

Julie Fleischer, director, media and consumer engagement for Kraft Foods, makes the case that brands should create content programs only out of authoritative topics. “At Kraft, it makes sense to our customers to talk about food, recipes and the like,” states Fleischer. “Kraft can be authoritative about those topics, and it works for our customer and in turn our marketing goals. But we are not authoritative about financial issues or home repair. If you are a brand and you are getting into content marketing, you’d better understand what topics you have the authority to communicate on.”

AMEX doesn’t talk about food. John Deere doesn’t talk about energy drinks. IBM doesn’t talk about horses.

Have you ever seen an image on a company Facebook page or an article on a corporate blog that just doesn’t fit? We all have. Companies that do this most likely don’t have a content marketing mission statement as a filter.

As you develop your content marketing mission statement, be sure that the content around which you create stories is an area in which you truly have expertise. If you don’t, then what’s the point?

CM MISSION BEST PRACTICES

Remember, content marketing is not about “what you sell,” it’s about “what you stand for.” The informational needs of your customers and prospects come first. *Although there must be clear marketing objectives behind the mission statement, they don’t need to be outlined here.* The Inc. mission statement doesn’t say anything about selling more advertising or paid event registrations. The P&G mission statement doesn’t say anything about selling more Swiffer pads. To work, your mission statement has to be all about the pain points (in other words, “what keeps

your customers up at night?") of your readers and followers. If it isn't, it simply won't work.

WHAT DO YOU DO WITH IT?

Not only does the content marketing mission statement provide the basis for your content strategy moving forward, it's also instrumental to your entire content creation process. Here's what you need to do with your content marketing mission statement.

- **Post it.** Display the mission statement where it can be found easily by your audience. The best place to put it is anywhere you develop non-product-oriented content for your customers, such as your blog site, a Facebook page, or main content site (such as an American Express OPEN Forum).
- **Spread it.** Make sure everyone involved in your content marketing process has the mission statement. Encourage others to print it out and pin it up on the wall. Give it to employees involved in the content creation process as well as any agency partners or freelancers you may be using. So often, content creators in a company are not aware of the overall content mission. Make sure you don't let that happen.
- **The litmus test.** Use the mission statement to decide what content you will and won't create. Often, a bad judgment in content creation can be fixed by running the content by the mission statement.

MATCHING WITH THE BUSINESS OBJECTIVE

Ultimately, it's all about marketing. It's about selling more products and services. If you are not changing behavior for the good of the business in some way, you are just producing content, not content marketing.

Let's reexamine the four company examples mentioned previously in terms of how their business objective should coincide with their mission statements:

- **American Express OPEN Forum.** OPEN Forum positions American Express as the trusted expert to small business owners. OPEN Forum, in order to be truly valuable, must include content other than just financial or credit issues, so it includes operations advice, marketing insights, and consumer research. OPEN Forum now delivers as many inbound leads as any other initiative from American Express.
- **Content Marketing Institute.** CMI gives away most of its educational content for free through daily updates. When subscribers want

to take that education to the next level in the form of an in-person “paid” event, they sign up, which almost always happens after they have been receiving the content as a subscriber for months.

- **Parametric Technology (PTC) Product Lifecycle blogs.** The blogs cover real insight into the challenge of product development. The results have been twofold. First, current customers become more loyal, and second, prospects are more likely to choose PTC because they rely on the blog content as a true industry resource.
- **Kraft Foods.** Not only can Kraft show that its content programs deliver, the company actually has over 1 million customers that pay to receive Kraft content on a regular basis.

Sometimes your content marketing mission statement is fully aligned with what you sell (as is the case with the Content Marketing Institute). Other times, the content you develop may be broader than what you actually have products and services for (as is the case with American Express). The important thing is to be aware of your mission statement and know what kind of products or services need to be sold at the end of the day. Knowing is half the battle, and if your audience isn't showing the right kind of behaviors in the long run, that may mean the content alignment and what you sell are just too far from each other.

THE SWEET SPOT

Once you decide on your content marketing mission, take some time and really think about your “sweet spot.” Your sweet spot is the intersection between your customers’ pain points and where you have the most authority with your stories.

This takes us back to one of the original questions: where can you be the leading expert in the world? But this time, let's add a short statement at the end: where can you be the leading expert in the *world that truly matters to your customers and your business?*

EPIC THOUGHTS

- For your content marketing mission statement to work, you need to clearly define three things specific to your content creation: (1) the core audience target, (2) what you will deliver to the audience, and (3) the major audience takeaway.
- Once your mission statement is created, distribute it to every content creator on your team (both inside and outside the company).

- Epic content marketing, in most cases, means telling a different story each time, not the same story repeatedly, but incrementally better each time. Is your mission statement innovative or just a retread of someone else's story?

EPIC RESOURCES

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