

# The content marketing arms race — to participate or to not participate?

[Business](#), [Marketing](#)



That is the question. We're confident Bill Shakespeare would still be a famous playwright today. He'd still garner massive attention and accolades wordsmithing in today's attention-starved environment. But what about the rest of us?

First, we're not fans of the label "content marketing." We don't think it's accurate, especially the way most people "content market." But it has caught on in the lexicon and is easy for most business people to grasp. At least it's not jargon.

Many people think content marketing is a new concept. It is... about as new as Gutenberg's printing press (invented around 1440 A. D.).

John Deere Company has used this concept successfully since 1894. They printed their catalog for bicyclers in 1894 (and probably printed catalogs before that). Soon after, 1895, "The Furrow". "Telling stories that folks enjoy reading -- and that they can use in their own operations -- has been the recipe since the beginning. Even the most technical subject has to have a human story behind it." So said current publications manager David Jones, the publication's 14th leader.

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"The Furrow" also gave info on the best seeds, times of year to plant, crop rotation and more. Farmers could get maximum crops per time invested (assuming outside factors like weather cooperated). And, oh by the way, a John Deere tractor can help you get more corn, green beans and peanuts off the same unit of land.

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Bottom line, people love to learn. We should say, ambitious people love to learn.

Providing people with valuable knowledge and lessons is a timeless principle. When you leverage this it's arguably the most powerful communication channel to bring in more leads and sales.

### **Today's two-fold “ content marketing” problem.**

We are over 20 years since the Internet and attention spans continue to drop. A study commissioned by Microsoft and written about in showed human attention spans are now less than that of a goldfish.

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Entrepreneurs and startups have long seen publishing valuable education as a cheaper option than TV or radio advertising. Even to content marketing now. The two big problems you face are :

1. Attention spans are critically short.
2. Competition creates increasing volume of content + higher production value + higher cost to create competitive content people will deem worthy of their attention.

### **Action item.**

Increased competition and investment in content has raised the bar. You can meet this higher standard in one of two ways.

First, you can create content at equal production value on more prestigious, trusted brand platforms. These brands have built-in audiences. They transfer prestige and trust to you and your content because they vouched for you by publishing it.

Second, you can raise production value close to what your competitors are doing with your material exceeding the usefulness and relevance of theirs. This option may or may not be within your budget.

Either way, promoting your content is the key.

It's been said 20 percent of the work for a book is writing it. The much more important 80 percent is your promotion plan to get it into the hands of the readers you created it to help. Yet so many people don't keep this 80/20 rule in mind when publishing articles, podcasts or videos. Even a \$20 ad budget can go a long way to introducing your content and starting a conversation with your desired audience.

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Keep these points in mind before developing your next piece of content.

Make sure, before you invest even one hour or \$1 in creating content, that it is likely to lead to your desired outcome. Once it meets this criteria, create it with the ideas I laid out in this article.