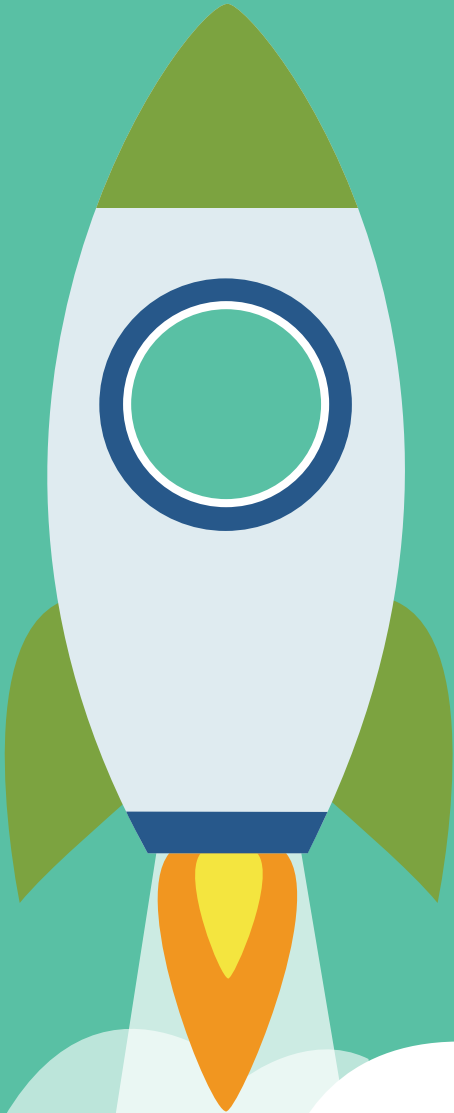


# WHAT'S YOUR CONTENT DEVELOPMENT APTITUDE?

How successful A/E/C firms excel at content marketing.



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### I SET OUT TO LEARN ABOUT TECHNOLOGY AND CAME BACK WITH INSIGHT ABOUT CONTENT.

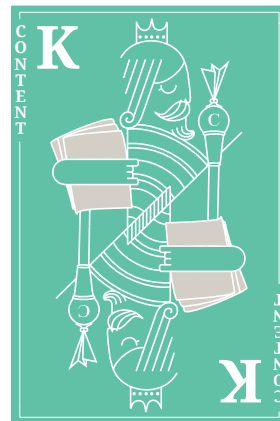
In preparation for my presentation at the SMPS Build Business conference this past summer in Philadelphia, I interviewed 25 marketing leaders from the Architecture, Engineering and Construction firms in the northeast. The focus of my conversations were related to emerging marketing technologies in the A/E/C space. As I spoke with these marketing professionals however, it became clear that technology was not as much a differentiator in their marketing efforts as content. Without good content, it doesn't matter what a website looks like, how an email campaign integrates with CRM or how a landing page performs on a mobile device.

An interesting revelation was how very differently each firm manages their content development process. That process seemed to be the biggest marketing differentiator between the firms with which I spoke. At one end of the scale, some firms are extremely effective in utilizing content to develop business and position themselves as industry or service experts and other firms do not get involved in content marketing whatsoever.

### THERE IS A COMPETENCE CURVE IN RELATION TO CONTENT DEVELOPMENT.

The firms that seem to be doing the most effective job with content marketing are the firms that have a more formalized content creation process that utilizes expertise from everyone in their organization.

Everyone has access to communications channels to disseminate their message. Almost all firms post content to their website, social media channels, blog, email list or other media outlets. The divide is related more to content development than content dissemination.

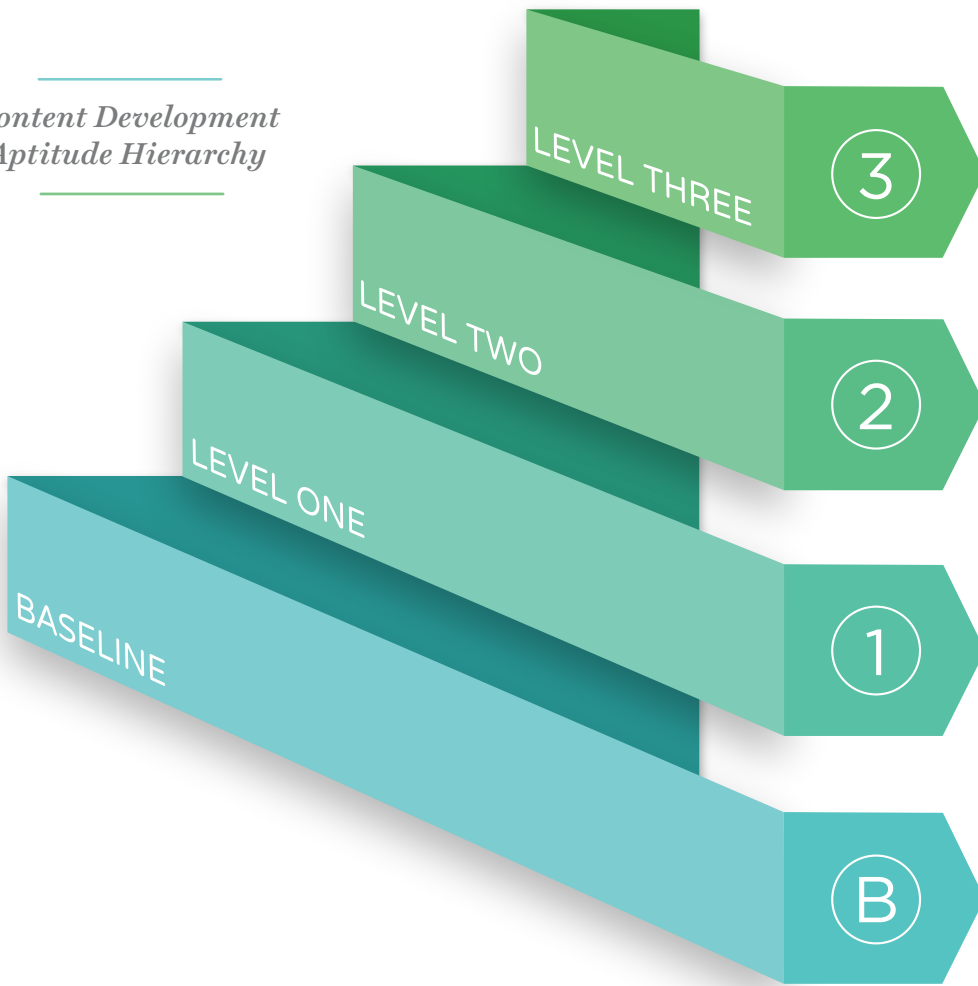


'Content is King' is a popular mantra but there is a notion of volume in that statement. There seems to be an underlying idea in that expression that resonates as: "We need to churn out content!" It's as if there is a quantity competition and the winner is crowned as the Content King!

Many firms generate a decent volume of content. The higher quality content, better stories with more visibility and value, comes from the firms with more active and sophisticated communications programs. Valuable content tends to be knowledge based or educational content vs. standard case studies and press releases.

The challenge is that interesting educational content is much harder to develop than a portfolio piece or an announcement. Based on my conversations and the content that I reviewed, I saw an apparent content development aptitude hierarchy. Below are my impressions on what those levels of sophistication look like and why they are important.

*Content Development  
Aptitude Hierarchy*



Budget and resources are provided for a system to input, organize, share, store and mine information that can be utilized in measurable thought leadership campaigns.

There is leadership buy-in to the value of thought leadership and subject matter expertise. This buy-in encourages a continuous conversation with, and flow of information to, the marketing communications team that is relevant and valuable to clients and partners.

Marketing communication activities, including content development, are prioritized as part of the business development process and assigned dedicated resources separately from proposal development activities.

Content development is part of the duties overseen by the marketing team and receives attention as permitted by other business development priorities.

**LEVEL 1: SEPARATION BETWEEN THE CONTENT DEVELOPMENT AND PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT GROUPS.**

Firms with distinct proposal groups and content marketing groups are less likely to have their content development and dissemination efforts derailed because of ongoing business development efforts.

Firm size is a factor in making this leap. Obviously a one person marketing team can't forsake a proposal to finish up an interesting case study. That doesn't mean that the biggest firms have the biggest or best marketing communication teams. Once a firm hits a threshold size of 50+ people, some firms integrate content development into their business culture and some have a less formal process and team structure. Those with formalized teams and processes seem to do a more effective job at generating relevant content.



Hide and Seek Information Flow



Information Flows From All Sources

## LEVEL 2: INFORMATION FLOW FROM ALL SOURCES VS. HIDE AND SEEK

Effective content development groups have active participation from the people in their firm. There is organizational buy-in to the value of the knowledge sharing process and commitment to keep the knowledge pipeline flowing throughout the organization.

It's the culture of the organization that makes the difference between a marketer spinning their wheels on a content treasure hunt and a marketer that is able to utilize their time evaluating and prioritizing which topic will have the greatest impact in the next content release. There really needs to be a culture in which everyone believes that knowledge sharing has value and that time should be dedicated, throughout the organization, to participate in the sharing process.

Effective firms understand this is an investment and that non-billable hours spent to produce relevant content produce returns in relationship and brand building efforts that impact the bottom line.

### KNOWLEDGE SHARE NOTES

Not everyone is a writer nor do they wish to become one. Part of creating a culture of sharing and participation is encouraging people to share their thoughts and ideas vs. committing them to producing a well focused, grammatically correct article. Fear of being penalized with additional work and responsibilities can have the opposite cultural effect. It is important to acknowledge people for participating in this process and provide the resources to take their contributions and see them through to a final piece.

Not everyone knows everything. Smart or experienced people have a tendency, once something becomes routine, to assume that their knowledge is commonplace. ([Dunning Kruger Effect](#)). It is important to encourage teams to share their experiences, challenges that they have faced and solutions they have implemented to uncover the hidden knowledge in an organization. What some may think is business as usual or nothing special, others will find interesting and thought provoking. It is from those 'knowledge nuggets' that useful and original content evolves.



**LEVEL 3: THERE IS A CENTRALIZED CONTENT REPOSITORY AND FORMAL PROCESS TO FACILITATE KNOWLEDGE SHARING**

Some firms meet on a regular basis to discuss new projects, processes and technologies that are being incorporated in the work that they do on a daily basis. At the top of the sophistication hierarchy are the firms that are actively utilizing either their CRM or other project management / information sharing tools to capture the knowledge within the organization.

These groups have the most formalized content development and information mining processes. There is a continuous input of information that can be consistently reviewed and evaluated as potential source material for stories and educational pieces.

Utilizing a content repository for this information gets a bit more sophisticated and requires budget and resources to execute effectively but it is something to set as a goal for any company that wants to be a content marketing leader.

*Content Repository*

If your organization is already incorporating these processes, kudos, you are ahead of the game. Most groups are not yet there. The more organic process for many marketers is that they have a general sense of the ongoing projects, and they do their best to lobby the experts on their teams to work with them on a thought leadership piece.

As you evolve your marketing campaigns, technologies and distribution channels, don't forget, 'Good Content is King!'

## SOME FURTHER READING

[The 2016 B2B Content Marketing Report from MarketingProfs and the Content Marketing Institute](#)

[Content creation tips from Matt Hyde at Lyquix](#)

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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Christian Shea is a principal at Lyquix. He works with clients to understand the real connections that they want to make with their audience and weaves that direction into the big picture ideas for a digital campaign. Christian develops campaign strategies that maintain focus and have a bottom line business impact for clients. Business results are at the core of everything that Lyquix develops.

[Learn more about Christian and about Lyquix](#)