



3 Steps to Prep for Your Digital Content Marketing Launch

If you're like most sailing brands, your sales team does excellent parking lot marketing. What's parking lot marketing? It's the conversations your team has with prospects and customers in marinas, at boat shows and in the drysail area at regattas. Parking lot marketing happens when your team goes to where the customers are and answers questions about how your product or service can improve someone's performance or make their sailing life safer or easier.

Parking lot marketing is effective, but it's not scalable. What *is* scalable is digital content marketing. If you take the conversations you have and place that helpful, customer-oriented information online, your prospects and customers can access answers to their questions whenever they need it. But where do you start?

This checklist walks you through the elements to have in place before you start producing and distributing content marketing on your digital channels.



Add an area to your website where you can house your content marketing

What: This might be [yourwebsite.com/blog](#), [yourwebsite.com/resources](#) or [yourwebsite.com/tipsandtricks](#). Whatever the name, this is the home of all your content, be it articles, videos, infographics, webinars or anything else.

How: Your web development team can easily create this for you. Ask for a blog main page where visitors can both search and filter content by topic.

Tip: Avoid using the news section of your site for this; people are unlikely to click on "news" while seeking an answer to their question.



Set up an email distribution service that allows for list segmentation

What: Even if you can't imagine having enough content that you'd email different groups, plan ahead. You'll eventually want the ability to send an email to a specific group of people based on their interests, location, buying history or other segment.

How: Compare platforms such as Constant Contact, Mailchimp, MailerLite, A Weber, GetResponse and HubSpot to see which works best for your budget and integration needs.

Tip: Look for an email platform that will integrate with your CRM. That way, you can manage your customer/prospects lists in one tool rather than two.

Create a profile on a social media platform where your customers and prospects are active

What: Few people will go to your website or sign up for your emails without prompting. Share content on a social platform where your audience spends time to direct them to your site. If they value the information you give them, they'll be more likely to sign up for your emails.

How: Pick a few keywords that relate to your offering and look for them on several social media sites. If you see conversations, that's probably a good place to be. Before you settle on it, look at the common post types: video (short or long), text, images, etc. Ask yourself if you'll be able to create compelling posts in that style.

Tip: Focus on only one platform so you're not spread too thin. You'll make a bigger impact by being great on one platform rather than mediocre on many.



Bonus: Invest in a marketing automation platform (ex. HubSpot, Salesforce Pardot, Omnisend, SharpSpring) if you have at least one full-time marketing team member

What: A marketing automation platform will let you automate content marketing tasks (posting on social media, sending emails, managing drip campaigns, etc.). Some email tools have full marketing automation options at a higher price point.

How: Make a list of must-have capabilities, then request a demo of the platforms that meet your requirements. Ask to speak with references whose team size and set-up are similar to yours. Read reviews on G2.com, Capterra.com or TrustRadius.com.

Tip: Budget is a big factor in selecting a marketing automation platform, but don't choose only on price. It can be painful and time-consuming to switch platforms. Have a 5-year marketing plan ready as you evaluate options so you can determine which platform will let you grow as planned.

Answering questions face to face will always be good for your business, but don't wait for those opportunities. Support your parking lot marketing by putting answers online. With these three (or four) elements in place, you'll be ready to create, publish and promote your digital content marketing.

Have questions about planning your content marketing launch?

I'm happy to answer general questions about how to set yourself up for success before your content marketing kickoff. Shoot me an email at nicole@sheddenmarketing.com or [schedule a quick call](#).