

EBOOK

How to solve your content crisis

The practical guide



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Is content keeping you awake at night?

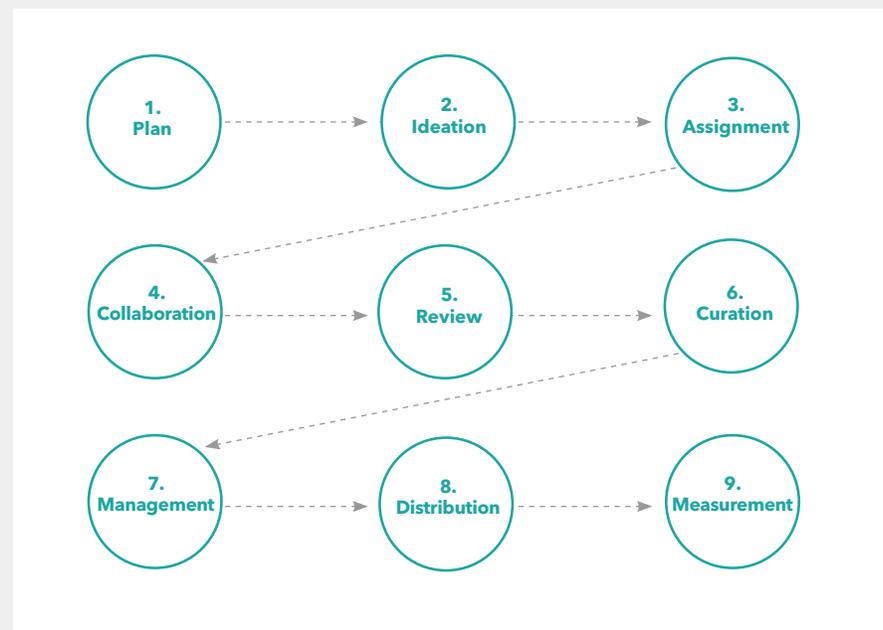
Publishing personalized content faster or more cost effectively is a priority for over 95% of global marketing leaders.¹

Your customers expect memorable moments at every brand touchpoint. But when you have websites, social pages, blogs, and gated content to consider, it can feel impossible to deliver everything with quality and speed – especially if content forms the bulk of your marketing strategy. It’s a recipe for a bottleneck in your marketing operations and a downturn in your department’s performance.

We call the result, “The Content Crisis.”

You can’t solve the Content Crisis by just working harder. Instead you need a plan and a platform that will help you deliver the volume and quality of content your audience demands.

Here’s a breakdown of the typical content creation and publishing process:



Usually, all this happens organically without any clear strategy. But by optimizing this process from start to finish, you can deliver more effective content, in a more efficient way.

¹ Sitecore and SoDA: Trends in Personalization report 2019: <https://www.sitecore.com/landing/corp/2019-sitecore-soda-trends-in-personalization-research-report>



Rewire your content creation process

We can help transform your content delivery from an off-the-cuff process, into one seamless, connected journey. Here's how:

Step 1: Get content out of the channel

In most organizations, content is authored and managed in the channel it's going to be published through. This approach comes with several disadvantages:

- Lots of parallel work streams
- Few opportunities for reuse across channels
- Overlapping efforts
- Risk of inconsistencies

With the number of marketing channels always expanding and the expectations around content rising, you need a plan to tackle this.

A first step is to move your content creation and management out of silos, to a place in front of or above your channels, depending on your content model. This approach acknowledges the omnichannel nature of the content you create and manage.

There can be resistance to this approach, as marketing teams have grown accustomed to working within channels. For many companies, this represents a paradigm shift that affects everything from internal reporting lines, to departmental budgets and widespread corporate politics.



The pushback might include:

- Each channel needs specific content (the web copy excuse)
- Content needs to be created in context (the layout excuse)
- We are special (the localization excuse)



Even though these arguments have some value, it's important to begin by creating and managing some of your content "above" the channels it will be used in. It's OK to tweak content for channel. But it makes no sense to create content for one channel, if it's going to be used across several. It's like re-creating the core messaging of your organization's value proposition every time you roll out a new campaign – a redundant time sink.

For this reason, it's good to articulate what content effort belongs in the channel, and what should be commonly developed and managed before it hits the channel.

Step 2: Define the process of content creation

The next step is to acknowledge that content creation and management is a process, and then to articulate the broad strokes of that process.

This will allow you to define the milestones of the content lifecycle and break it down into use cases and the associated functional capabilities of each stage.

The whole content creation process is often seen as complicated and difficult to structure. To take some of the mystery (and drama) out, you can start by breaking it down into a few large steps that make the process tangible:

- Plan
- Author and collaborate
- Manage and curate
- Publish and measure effectiveness

We elaborate on each of these steps below.

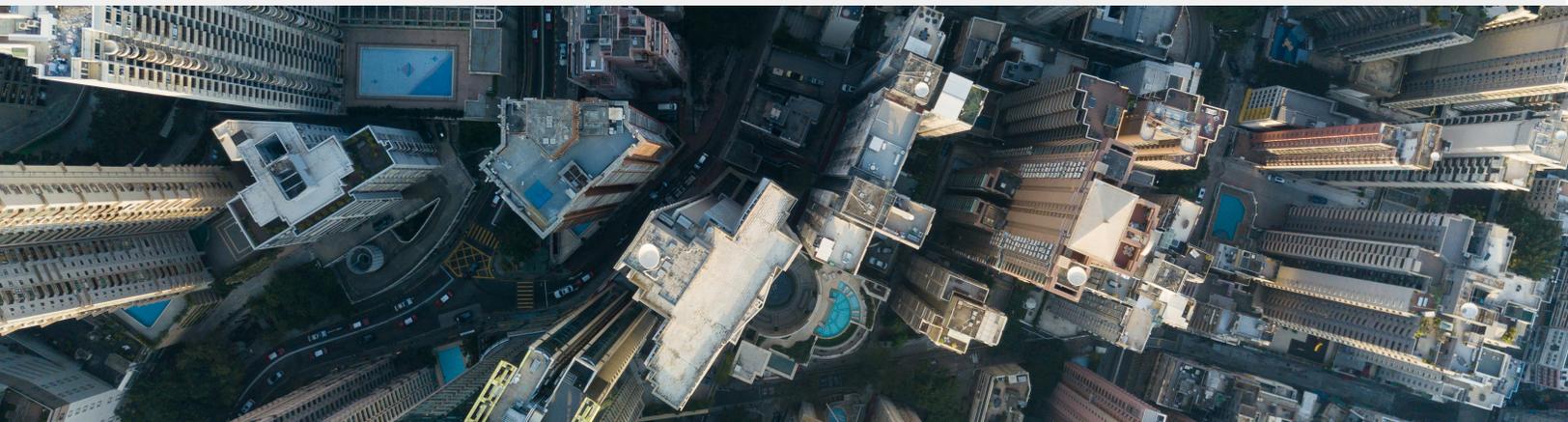
Step 3: Integrate in the enterprise landscape

A content supply chain needs to be connected to the channels where content is delivered. But it also needs to connect to the back-office systems that own the raw assets you will be building on.

Enterprise back office systems, or supplier sources, contain bits and pieces of information you will need in your end channels. Examples include:

- ERP or PLM systems that contain product information
- OEM suppliers that provide information you want to enrich
- DMS may provide technical manuals you'll want to use in a CRM service scenario

This is especially important in industries where other systems own source content, and the publication channels are not so curated but require automated updates. This is often the case in product-based businesses (such as CPG, retail, fashion and apparel, industrial manufacturers).



Step 4: Modularize content

Sophisticated channels will require more structure from your content than you may be used to.

Once you go into localization or personalization scenarios for web or marketing automation – whether persona-based or individual-based – you'll realize that managing all of the permutations of combined content elements will not be sustainable.

This means you need to think about your content as something that can be structured and managed at an even more granular level.

Examples include:

- Standardizing product properties, such as commercial descriptions and benefits. This will allow you to reuse benefits across peer products or tweak the order for different markets.

- Articulating the different content blocks in a touchpoint and the variants needed to address different personas.
- Managing these content blocks in a structured way, so that any review and translation process is simplified. This will allow your colleagues to translate or alter specific parts of the content, rather than starting fresh every time.

Step 5: Define content ownership and governance

You've moved content out of channels and begun to view channels as users – not creators – of content. Now it's time to determine who owns what content.

When you have several disparate systems that all house their own assets, it's easy to lose track of who owns the rights and governance to each version, and who gives final approval on each one.

With a Digital Asset Management (DAM) system, you get one central platform that contains all the crucial versions. You own the rights to your assets, and can manage, edit, and trust your content day-in, day-out. With content centrally stored, you can approve, localize, and personalize it to the customer experience with ease.





The Sitecore Content Hub

The Sitecore Content Hub is part of our approach to solving the Content Crisis. It's an outstanding platform to deliver enhanced customer experiences through consistent, personalized content.

Here, we'll explore how our Content Hub can help you at each stage of the content lifecycle.

Plan

Depending on your marketing goals and organizational setup, your plan may be campaign, persona, or topic driven, or structured in other ways.

Overall, it typically involves planning the content production and publication for several channels on a calendar, to the point of identifying individual pieces of content that need to be created.

Generally, there will be a publication date, and a related production time that is derived by back-planning from the publication date.

Depending on your process, the planning phase can also include some of the strategic and creative ideation around content, as well as some of the program and project workstream planning. In other cases, this may be part of the next step – authoring and collaborating.





Author and collaborate

This step involves the authoring of content, and collaboration between all stakeholders to review, annotate, comment, and approve content.

Content is often created on desktop tools (such as Word, Photoshop, or InDesign) during this stage. But it can also be created directly in channels.

Collaboration includes all the activities where stakeholders provide feedback on content. Typical use cases and associated capabilities include:

- Sharing files
- Version management
- Preview of different file types in the browser
- Check-in/check-out, real-time collaborative editing
- Online review, comments, annotation, and proofing

You may also require:

- Project management with timeline-based (Gantt style) retro planning, tasks, resource management, and budget management.
- Agile collaboration with shared workspaces, user stories, backlog, and kanban tools.
- Iterative approaches, where pilot content is developed for a single language and market, and then localized for language, culture, and market specifics in subsequent rounds. We discuss some of this below as part of the Modular Content approach.

As the final outcome of your collaborative efforts, you will see a final and validated piece of content roll off the production line, and into the repository.

Manage and curate

Once content is final, it needs to be managed and curated. Proper content curation is the key to maximizing value in the publication downstream.

Basic use cases include version management and making source files and renditions available.

We recommend adding metadata to organize content and make it available for discovery by search and querying. Metadata is information that is attached to the actual item you manage, and serves the purpose of better qualifying that item. A simple example of metadata is a book: the book and its text content is the item we want to manage. We organize it in our library by labeling it with metadata such as the author, publisher, reference number, genre etc.





Proper metadata management is important for content to be found, and thus used. Sophisticated use cases such as personalization and localization are virtually impossible to facilitate without proper metadata.

Curation is where you actively manage your collection of content, much like a curator would manage an art collection for a museum. You not only do the basic management and metadata tagging (which is, to stick with our analogy, the basic housekeeping of a museum), but you will also create exhibitions, highlighting pieces that have a special relevance to specific times of year, and providing context to other pieces.

When curating content, you leverage all your tools, including structured metadata and the editorial tools in the portal, to set up a dialogue with your community and highlight your most relevant pieces of content or best examples. The portal is especially important here, because it allows you to bring content out of its rigid time-based structure, and to provide editorial content and context around it.

Publication, personalization, and measurement

Users can use the platform to search for, edit, and *publish* content.

However, a full-fledge content supply chain should include omnichannel capabilities. To get that, you'll need to connect systems so you can orchestrate the publication of content across various channels.

There are, generally, two scenarios: make content available for use in curated channels or directly publish content to uncurated scenarios.

Curated channels are channels where content is actively managed, adapted, and combined before it's published. One typical example is a website, where the team of webmasters will leverage content from the central repository to build a channel-specific experience.

In these curated channels, you can make content available for use by either integrating it into native libraries, or providing an intuitive way to search, browse, and select content from the native authoring tools or editors.

In an uncurated scenario, content is validated and then published automatically to the proper channels, without an additional step. Product content for commerce is a typical example.

Of course, many real-life use cases are more complicated and often a mix of both scenarios. You may want to automatically push product content to the product detail pages in your commerce platform, while also wanting to actively curate your homepage and category or campaign landing pages.

Publishing can also involve the assembly of modular content blocks from the central repository into composite publications that are specific to the channel.

The entire content lifecycle covered

The Sitecore Content Hub covers the entire content lifecycle, from planning, authoring and collaboration, through management and curation – all the way to publication, personalization, and feedback of analytics.

Sitecore Content Hub blends, replaces, and redefines several traditional software categories (DAM, PCM, CMP, MRM, Web-to-Print). It provides capabilities that are key to multiple common business cases (setting up online commerce, omnichannel, content marketing, digital transformation) that all revolve around the challenge of streamlining content.

That means you can finally deliver the volume and quality of content you need to delight customers at every touchpoint. And in the process, you can solve your Content Crisis.

To learn more about how the Sitecore Content Hub can streamline your content marketing operations, [visit sitecore.com](https://www.sitecore.com).

About Sitecore

Sitecore is the global leader in digital experience management software that combines content management, commerce, and customer insights. The Sitecore Experience Cloud™ empowers marketers to deliver personalized content in real time and at scale across every channel – before, during, and after a sale. More than 5,200 brands – including American Express, Carnival Cruise Lines, Kimberly-Clark, and L'Oréal – have trusted Sitecore to deliver the personalized interactions that delight audiences, build loyalty, and drive revenue.