



Better results through content

Content strategy maturity workbook

Your roadmap through the complexities of developing a content strategy for your organization.

The content on your website is more than just words and images; it's the heartbeat of your organization's online presence.

It tells your story, conveys your values, and connects you with your audience.

But how do you ensure that this vital asset is working effectively and efficiently towards your goals?

That's where content strategy maturity comes into play.

Throughout this workbook, we explore the key elements of content strategy maturity, including how to create, manage, and measure content in a way that aligns with your organizational goals.



Find your content strategy starting point



Begin by taking the ten question quiz at:

contentstrategyquiz.com

No matter how you score, remember that there are no failing grades. Your result provides a way to review your organization's content framework and explore actionable next steps.

A clear understanding of your current level provides a foundation for strategic planning, informed decision-making, and the ability to adapt to an ever-changing digital landscape.

Mark the result you received from the quiz:

Level 1: Ad Hoc

<https://contentstrategyquiz.com/results/ad-hoc>

Organizations at the Ad Hoc level are starting to explore content strategy, but their lack of maturity indicators often leads to fragmented efforts and inconsistent results, as if everyone is acting independently and hoping for the best.

Level 2: Emerging

<https://contentstrategyquiz.com/results/emerging>

Your organization is advancing towards content strategy maturity, recognizing its ROI and adopting formal, measurable practices to improve your content culture.

Level 3: Organized and Repeatable

<https://contentstrategyquiz.com/results/organized>

Your organization has significantly progressed in building a foundation for content strategy maturity; it's crucial to maintain this momentum to avoid plateauing.

Level 4: Managed and Sustainable

<https://contentstrategyquiz.com/results/managed>

You've significantly advanced in implementing content strategy across your organization, typically seeing a notable ROI at this level; continuously evaluate and refine your approach to sustain your content-first culture.

Level 5: Optimized and Strategic

<https://contentstrategyquiz.com/results/strategic>

Congratulations on fully embracing content strategy. Celebrate your success, but remember, there's always room for improvement, efficiency gains, and new challenges, even at this advanced level.

Next steps

Level 1: Ad Hoc

There's no time like the present to begin your content strategy journey! Start by establishing key foundational practices rather than diving into the deep end. Each organization is different, so consider your resources and remember that cultural shifts take time, care, and nurturing.

Formalize your strategy

Create a core content strategy statement or a set of strategic content priorities to describe what content needs to achieve, who it is for, and the value it provides to your users and the business.

Define success

Each piece of content you create should work to accomplish a goal. Plan for your success metrics and measurement approach to evolve alongside your strategy.

Interview stakeholders

Connect with your internal teams to determine their individual business and content needs, objectives, capabilities, and challenges.

Understand your audience

What types of communications work best? How can your organization meet your users' needs while achieving your objectives?

Set your standards

Establish what quality content looks like for your organization and provide guidelines for your community of creators.

Educate and advocate

Explain what you're doing, why you're doing it, and what you hope to achieve. Make it easy for your community to contribute to your efforts.

Level 2: Emerging

Now is the time to build upon your progress and elevate your content strategy. Here are some key actions to consider at this stage.

Promote your strategy

Bring your strategy to life with clear and consistent communications, ensuring your creators understand how their contributions align with and support your objectives.

Evaluate your metrics

Each piece of content should have a goal, a defined audience, and appropriate success metrics. Set a cadence for regular check-ins.

Audit for alignment

Conduct audits to align your content with your strategy. Plan to remove or refine content that lacks a clearly defined audience, purpose, and measurement method.

Deepen audience understanding

Invest in user research and analysis to gain deeper insights into preferences, behaviors, and needs.

Elevate your standards

Develop guidelines and resources for your brand's voice and tone, visual aesthetics, and language choices.

Assemble your squad

Establish a cross-departmental team to oversee content operations. Invest in building bridges across silos within the organization.

Next steps, continued

Level 3: Organized and Repeatable

Your organization has made meaningful progress in developing the foundations for content strategy maturity. Level 3 is the most commonly achieved stage for organizations. Keep the positive momentum going so as not to plateau!

Champion your strategy

Advocate for the resources and support needed to achieve your content goals. Emphasize the long-term benefits and positive impact on organizational success. Leadership support is critical at this stage.

Invest in training materials

Help people increase their skills by offering content strategy worksheets, brand and editorial guidelines, and a robust selection of training resources.

Give content a lifecycle

Establish a cadence for rolling content audits so all content is updated, repurposed, or removed. Ensure teams are measuring and evaluating content performance.

Assess your systems.

Investigate how content is categorized and described across systems. Are there opportunities to leverage metadata, taxonomy, and SEO keywords?

Cultivate transparent processes

Document and promote content governance policies and procedures—compliance resources, transparent workflows, and pathways for requesting support.

Document roles and responsibilities

Maintain a record of content contributors, including their roles and responsibilities. Include formal accountability in job descriptions or performance reviews.

Level 4: Managed and Sustainable

You've made momentous strides in operationalizing content strategy throughout your organization. At this level, organizations typically experience a significant return on investment. Plan to continually evaluate and refine your approach while nurturing your content-first culture.

Regularly assess your strategy

Is your strategy achieving results? Are creators using it to guide their content choices? Are your goals and success metrics appropriate? Would a diversified strategy better support your internal teams? Review and refine as needed. Encourage leadership to be vocal in their support.

Nurture your community

Establish a process for creators to regularly meet and share their content plans, triumphs, and challenges. Learn and grow together, breaking down silos. Connect with your community of creators to ensure they have the skills, resources, and support they need to succeed.

Strengthen content operations

The work of Content Operations should be transparent and well-understood. Formalize, document, and centralize policies and procedures. Hold your creators accountable by only allowing them to publish high-quality content. Use analytics and success metrics to inform future content decisions.

Center your audience

At this level, user personas, journey maps, competitive audits, usability testing, and additional user research can be highly effective. Be sure to train your community of creators on how to utilize these resources so the content they create meets user and business needs.

Fine-tune your systems

Don't let your publishing platforms hold you back. Ensure content is appropriately structured, optimized, described, and discoverable. Stay on top of your taxonomies, metadata, and SEO strategies. Evaluate the authoring experience of your CMS.

Level up your tactics

Focus on small, sustainable changes and measure the outcomes. Changing or trying too many tactics at once makes it difficult to measure their effectiveness. Set a goal, make a prediction, experiment with a new tactic, and measure the outcomes.

Next steps, continued

Level 5: Optimized and Strategic

Congratulations! You've embraced content strategy to such an extent that it must feel like you're unstoppable. Take some time to celebrate, but remember, content strategy has no endpoint. Even organizations at this level have improvements to make, efficiencies to embrace, and challenges to conquer.

Strengthen your foundations

Don't let changes in leadership or staffing turnover undo your hard work. Ensure your foundational practices are strong, well-documented, and operationalized throughout your organization.

Build a team of content professionals

Remember, content is how you tell your story, make connections, and achieve your goals. Protect your investment by creating full-time content-focused positions, teams, and leadership.

Don't stop

Research, plan, measure, refine. Regularly audit your content. Factor ownership and accountability into job descriptions. Evaluate training materials and your publishing platforms. Make sure your brand stands out for all the right reasons.

Create a core strategy statement

A core content strategy statement sets the long-term direction for your content-related initiatives.

It encapsulates and expresses what you want your content to achieve, who it is for, and the value it provides to your users and your organization.

Mad Libs style

Fill in the blanks with your answers.

My organization publishes _____ content that helps us

1 or 2 descriptive adjective(s)

_____ and _____
Accomplish goal Accomplish goal

by making _____ feel _____ ,
Audience(s) Descriptive adjective

_____ and _____ ,
Descriptive adjective Descriptive adjective

convincing them to _____ and _____ .
Take desired action Take desired action

Example of a core strategy statement

Four Kitchens' Creative Team core content strategy statement

My organization publishes values-driven, actionable content that helps us
1 or 2 descriptive adjective(s)

Set knowledge free and establish ourselves within the industry as a top-notch creative team
Accomplish goal Accomplish goal

by making our peers, clients, and prospects feel inspired,
Audience(s) Descriptive adjective

confident and motivated,
Descriptive adjective Descriptive adjective

convincing them to improve their processes and make informed decisions.
Take desired action Take desired action

Creating page tables

Page tables are a way for you to apply your content strategy and plan to every page on your website. You can use them for social media and articles too.

Page table for: _____
Name of page

Primary purpose

In one sentence, describe what this page needs to do. Which goal(s) does it support?

Target audience

What audience types (personas) are being prioritized for this page?

Tasks/user stories

Why are they here? What do they need? What do they value?

User story format: As a _____ (persona), I want/need to _____ (action) so that I can _____ (do/feel).

Meta information

Page title tag: _____

Appears as the page name in search engine result pages (SERPs), as the browser tab label, as the headline on social media when shared, and what a screen reader will announce as the page name.

Page description: _____

What search engines will display as the description for your web page in search results, and what screen readers will announce for visually impaired users

Social sharing thumbnail image and alt text: _____

The image you want to appear when this page URL is shared.

URL suffix: _____

Friendly URL structure recommendation, if applicable. E.g. /about or /blog/caring-for-your-website

Continues on next page

Creating page tables, continued

Source Content

1 Priority Content

2 Secondary Content

3 Tertiary Content

Content Governance & Lifecycle

Author: _____

Who will create/edit the content for this page?

Topic expert: _____

Who might need to be consulted?

Editor: _____

Who will be responsible for maintaining this page?

Review/archive timescale: _____

The timescale or frequency with which this page needs to be reviewed and revised or archived.

Example page table

Page table for: Agency about page
Name of page

Primary purpose

In one sentence, describe what this page needs to do. Which goal(s) does it support?

Talk about who we are as a company, why our values are important to us
and provide a list of our team members

Target audience

What audience types (personas) are being prioritized for this page?

People who want to work for us (and with us)

Tasks/user stories

Why are they here? What do they need? What do they value?

User story format: As a _____ (persona), I want/need to _____ (action) so that I can _____ (do/feel).

As a person looking for a job, I want to learn more about what working at
this agency will be like so I can know if I want to work there.

Meta information

Page title tag: About the agency

Appears as the page name in search engine result pages (SERPs), as the browser tab label, as the headline on social media when shared, and what a screen reader will announce as the page name.

Page description: To be determined...

What search engines will display as the description for your web page in search results, and what screen readers will announce for visually impaired users

Social sharing thumbnail image and alt text: Use the default sharing image and alt text

The image you want to appear when this page URL is shared.

URL suffix: /about

Friendly URL structure recommendation, if applicable. E.g. /about or /blog/caring-for-your-website

Continues on next page

Example page table, continued

Source Content

1 Priority Content

1. Hero area with headline, subhead, and hero image
2. Share our values and why they are important to us

2 Secondary Content

Interactive list of our team with a filter by role (Design, engineering, etc.)

3 Tertiary Content

Call to action to apply to work for us

Content Governance & Lifecycle

Author: Randy Oest and admin team (for the list of the team and their titles)

Who will create/edit the content for this page?

Topic expert: Admin team

Who might need to be consulted?

Editor: Admin team for when people come and go

Who will be responsible for maintaining this page?

Review/archive timescale: Review page during quarterly planning

The timescale or frequency with which this page needs to be reviewed and revised or archived.

Further reading

Just Enough Research

by Erika Hall

<https://abookapart.com/products/just-enough-research>

Content Strategy for the Web by Kristina Halvorson and Melissa Rach

<https://www.contentstrategy.com/content-strategy-for-the-web>

"Core Strategy vs. Strategic Priorities: Which Is Right for You?"

by Kristina Halvorson

<https://www.braintraffic.com/blog/core-strategy-vs-strategic-priorities-which-is-right-for-you>

The Content Strategy Toolkit

by Meghan Casey

<https://www.contentstrategy.com/the-content-strategy-toolkit>

Association Content Strategies for a Changing World

by Carrie Hane, Dina Lewis, and Hilary Marsh

<https://www.asaecenter.org/publications/110419-association-content-strategies-for-a-changing-world-pdf>

Looking for a partner to help you
with content strategy?

Four Kitchens is here to help.

We'd love to partner together on your journey to
content maturity!

Reach out to randy@fourkitchens.com.