

SUMMARY

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CONTENT RULES

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Summary of Content Rules by Ann Handley & C.C. Chapman

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Learn how to create the content that will set your
brand apart.

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Introduction

If you're an awesome entrepreneur but you suck at social media... this book is for you! Same goes for any business person who struggles with writing blogs or creating any type of promotional material. In an ever-changing market that's driven by the need to stand out from the crowd, it can be tough to create content that sends the message you want. Over the course of this summary, you'll be provided with a tool kit that will help you achieve all your content goals.



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What is Content and Why Do We Need It?

The internet has completely revolutionized the way we communicate. It has also impacted the way we do business in the modern age. So, if you want to stay relevant in the digital age, it's important to upgrade your business practices! And integrating social media into your ad campaigns is one of the best ways to do that. That's because old-school methods can't cut it anymore. The customers who will love your products are out there, but they're not looking at their local newspapers anymore. Instead, they're looking at their phone. So, if you want to reach them, you have to start by speaking their (digital) language.

That's where content creation-- and the entire point of this book!-- comes in. Because, today, you don't have a hope of staying relevant if you don't create engaging digital content. Unfortunately, however, the authors observe that there isn't a lot of guidance out there about how to do that. Most marketing books will tell you that the key to successful marketing is to create great content. But those books rarely tell you how to do that. So, at the end of the day, you're left with a lot of confusion about what "good content" really is and how you can create some for your business.

Spoiler alert: "good content" is not a blog post which basically says, "Our stuff is great! Go buy our stuff!" That's what a lot of businesses end up with and that rarely helps them to accomplish their goals. Why? Because everybody is screaming into the void about how awesome their product is!

Even if their product absolutely sucks, every company out there has learned that they can use the internet as a megaphone. They can use social media to amplify their voices, to scream their message, and blast you with ads until you give in and buy their product. At least... that's what they hope will happen.

Because all of us have sort of been there at one point or another. Even if you don't like McDonald's that much, sometimes you can see a McDonald's commercial so many times that you give in and buy yourself a Big Mac

whether you were really craving it or not. However, succumbing to fast food temptation is a little different from spending your hard-earned money on a bigger product that you neither want nor need. People are far less likely to do that and that's why you can't afford to waste your time, money, and marketing potential on campaigns that basically annoy people into buying your product.

That strategy might have been a little more effective during your grandfather's day-- back when people only had one TV channel and they couldn't switch channels or fast-forward to avoid commercials. But today, your target customers can easily mute you by unfollowing, deleting, or scrolling past your content. Put simply, it doesn't matter how loud you scream or how many ad campaigns you launch; if people aren't interested, they can still find ways to avoid you.

So, that's why it's important to think critically about your content while you're crafting it. And that might require you to re-think everything you think you know about content. So, although this might seem a little bit simplistic, it's a good idea to go all the way back to the basics. And we're going to start by unpacking the definition of "content." Put simply, content can be anything that provides information about you, your brand, and the services you offer. Content can be a blog post, a video, a website page, or a post on social media. It can be a Tik Tok, a tweet, an online giveaway, or a flier. Content can literally be anything!

However, there's a massive difference between "content" and "good content." Although you might feel stumped while working on content for your brand, the truth is that you know good content when you see it. And you also know bad content when you see it! For example, when you see corny ads that take themselves too seriously or fliers with bad graphics and colors that don't go together, you instantly know that that content is bad! And you also probably know that that isn't the vibe you want to represent your brand.

Instead, you want to create content that is engaging, authentic, and customer-centered-- the kind of content that makes people look to your

brand as a reliable source of information. But how do you do that? The authors observe that market research-- aka knowing your audience-- is key. If you take your time, do your market research, and get to know your audience, you can develop a better idea of the material that will resonate with your audience.

That material can take a variety of different shapes and forms. For example, depending on your brand and your customers, some people may respond better to blog posts while others will be more excited about Instagram reels. It's your job to figure out who your ideal customer is and what type of content they're looking for. This book can't do that for you but it can help you identify good content and learn how to create it. And, once you know those basics, you can tailor your content to fit you and your brand.



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Engage With Your Customers by Telling A Story

But if your brand tells a story, people want to engage. For example, the authors invite you to consider the success of the diaper brand Pampers and the strategies they used to create an engaging ad campaign. The Pampers marketing department understood that if you want people to connect with your product, you can't just sell diapers-- you have to sell your customers a story.

They did that by creating a video series called "Welcome to Parenthood." This series featured normal, everyday parents talking about their days and their relationships with their new babies while they went through the everyday tasks of parenthood such as changing diapers and bonding with their babies. Because the series was honest, funny, and authentic, people connected with it-- and were more likely to buy Pampers.

The authors assert that the success of this campaign is down to two things: relatability and subtlety. We all know what it feels like to watch a commercial that's too "over- the- top." As a general rule, we recoil or laugh in scorn, wondering, "Do they seriously think THAT would make people want to buy something??" We all know what that feels like, so it's a good idea to bring that sensation with you when you're brainstorming your content.

Therefore, we can also say that "less is more" is a good rule of thumb for any ad campaign. No matter what form your content takes, you want that content to look MORE authentic and LESS like an ad. Because, at the core, a successful ad campaign is all about connecting with your customers.

And that's where the importance of interaction comes in. Another great way to get your customers engaged is to present them with a marketing campaign that invites ordinary, individual customers to be part of your ad campaign by telling their own stories about their relationship with your product.

For example, if you're trying to sell FitBits, you could encourage customers to post on their own social media channels about their experience with

FitBits. Ask them to talk about their relationship with exercise and how their FitBit is part of that story. Invite them to post pictures of themselves exercising with the promise of the best snaps getting featured on your account. This engaging narrative-- combined with the hope of having their picture displayed in front of millions-- will get people excited in a hurry!

But creating quality content is only the first step. You also have to think about how-- and where-- that content is going to be displayed. For example, ad campaigns that look too gimmick-y fall right into the “screaming into the void” category. People are tired of seeing those and they’ve learned to mute or unfollow them. As a result, your goal should be to create content that doesn’t look like an ad. Instead of bright, flashy graphics and clickbait-y headlines, go for a high quality post that looks like it naturally belongs on an aesthetically pleasing feed.

Whether that means partnering with leading models and influencers who can showcase your brand or designing something entirely new, your goal is to create an image so compelling that people are drawn to hit “like” and check it out. When they see your image, they should be so surprised that they exclaim, “That’s an ad??”

But it’s also important to consider where you post your ads. For example, if Twitter isn’t the hot thing at the moment, you probably shouldn’t waste time posting there. Similarly, if you post on a buzzing social network but fail to follow the etiquette of that platform, you’re shooting yourself in the foot. So, take some time, do your research, and craft a meaningful campaign that tells a story.



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Diversify Your Platforms to Connect With More Customers

In the previous chapters, we've talked about content: what it is, why we need it, and how to create the right kind of content. But now we want to shift gears a bit and learn more about WHERE to post your content. As we've established in the previous chapters, the most effective methods will differ for everybody. It all depends on your ideal customer and where they're most likely to look.

For example, some of your customers are more likely to engage with social media or to watch a video. It's up to you to do your market research and find out what your customers most want to see. But one thing remains pretty universal for everybody: if you can create an engaging message and saturate the market with that message, you'll get more customers.

And that's why it's important to diversify your platforms and make sure you're on every form of social media out there. For example, if your business has a blog but no Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter, it's time to get on all those platforms. Conversely, if you're totally up to date with Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter but you don't have a blog, you need to hop on the blog train!

Many businesses seem to struggle with blogs more than any other type of content. But blogs aren't scary, intimidating, or even hard-- as long as you know how to create great content! (Pro tip: if you're not a wordsmith, hire a blogger for your business! It will be one of the best decisions you've ever made!)

That's because a blog is one of the best ways to get your ideas across. In fact, most people have a blog of their own! Whether you're a writer, a business owner, or an aspiring influencer, a blog is a great way to translate your ideas into an easily readable format. A blog can also be a great way to connect with others on social media; if your content is relatable and compelling, your

readers will likely share your article with friends or post it on their own platforms.

And when that happens, you increase your views, readers, and blog traffic. No doubt about it: when done right, blogging is a win-win for everybody! But if you haven't yet connected your blog to your social media platforms, you might be missing out on an important strategy that can help you achieve the results you want.

So, how do you do it? One simple way to start is by linking your social media platforms on your blog's homepage. If you're using a blogging service like Wordpress or Blogger, both of them have options that will allow you to embed little social media icons in notable positions on your blog.

For example, let's say that-- in the top right corner of my personal website, just slightly above my site's header-- I have three little pink icons that denote Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. If you were to click on any of those icons, you would automatically be directed to the corresponding social media profile for my site. This gives you the option to check out my social media profiles, follow me if you want to, and share my site's content via your own social media platform. So, that's one way to do it!

Another good strategy is to include links to your blog on your social media. For example, I've used the bio section of my Twitter and Instagram to include a link to my website. That means that if you were browsing my social media and saw that link, you might think, "Hmm, wonder what that's about?" and click the link to find out. This would take you straight to my website and boost both my social media and blog traffic!

And lastly, you can also take advantage of embedded links. If you're familiar with blogging at all, you probably know how to do this already. But if you're not, get ready to meet a tool that will change the future of your business! If you're writing a post on any topic, you can embed a link in any line or sentence of your article with a couple of simple clicks.

This link can direct readers to a source that backs up the statistics you're using or to another resource that proves your point. Or, if you're a guest blogger for another publication, you can use this tool to direct readers back to your own website or to a relevant article you've written!

All of these tools are a little bit different, but they do have one core thing in common: all of them can be used to increase your views, boost your followers, and spread your message to a wider audience. On their own, your blog and your social media platforms can be powerful tools. But when you combine your platforms, you can expand your reach and connect with more people. This will help you grow your brand and generate the online traffic you've been hoping for.



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Final Summary

Content rules-- literally! If you're an entrepreneur, an aspiring influencer, or anyone who wants to get your message in front of people, content is king! But creating compelling content can be hard if you don't have the right tools and the right guidelines to do so.

That's why the authors offer their own guide to making content creation simple. All you have to do is: do your market research, get to know your audience, and create content that will resonate with your ideal customers. Once you know who your customers are and what kind of content will resonate with them, the hardest part is already over!

Just remember that, no matter what field you're in, every customer is more likely to connect with content that tells a story. So, create content that tells a story and invites your customers to engage, and you'll be golden! And if you're not a creative type, no worries-- there are plenty of bloggers and creative writers out there who would love to help you!

Lastly, just remember to diversify your platforms to spread your message across as many channels as possible, and you have a surefire recipe for creating content that rules.



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